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FOUR

ESSAYS.

BY THOMAS LUDLAM, A.M.

BRITISH MUSEUM

FOUR

ESSAYS,

ON THE

ORDINARY AND EXTRAORDINARY OPERATIONS OF THE HOLY SPIRIT;

ON

THE APPLICATION OF EXPERIENCE TO RELIGION;

AND ON

ENTHUSIASM AND FANATICISM.

TO WHICH IS PREFIXED

A PRELIMINARY DISSERTATION,

ON

THE NATURE OF CLEAR IDEAS

AND THE ADVANTAGE OF DISTINCT KNOWLEDGE.

IN THESE ESSAYS

THE NATURE OF THE OPINIONS MAINTAINED,

THE JUSTNESS OF THE REASONING EMPLOYED,

AND THE PROPRIETY OF THE LANGUAGE ADOPTED,

IN THE

SCRIPTURE CHARACTERS

OF

THE REV. THOMAS ROBINSON,

ARE FULLY CONSIDERED.

BY THOMAS LUDLAM, A.M.

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The candid Reader, it is hoped, will excuse a few repetitions, where it was not thought advisable to interrupt the course of the reasoning by a reference.

BRITISH MUSEUM

PRELIMINARY DISSERTATION,

UPON

THE NATURE OF CLEAR IDEAS

AND

THE ADVANTAGE OF DISTINCT KNOWLEDGE.

IT hath pleaſed the Creator of mankind to beſtow upon them various faculties of body and mind: his manifeſt intention in ſo doing is to qualify them for the *enjoyment* of happineſs, or for the *acquiſition* of this enjoyment. For, thoſe ends which the works of God are calculated to produce with the greateſt readineſs and certainty, muſt be deemed the ends which he intended to produce. Unleſs this propoſition be admitted, the great argument from *final cauſes* is inconcluſive.

Now, neither the *happineſs* men are qualified to enjoy, nor the *means* neceſſary to procure this enjoyment, nor the *knowledge* neceſſary to aſcertain theſe means, are *directly* provided for them. All theſe are to be the acquiſition of their *own* attention, activity, labour, and diligence, exerted in the

exerciſe of thoſe various faculties of body and mind which God has given them for this purpoſe.

And here we may not improperly obſerve the difference between *reaſon* and *inſtinct*. The animal world, like mankind, are provided with faculties adapted for the enjoyment of ſuch happineſs as their Creator has appointed for them, and alſo for the acquiſition of this enjoyment; but they are reſtrained to *one* ſingle method of acquiring it. The great privilege of reaſon is to *adapt means* to ends; and the great excellence of it to adapt the *fitteſt* means, as circumſtances may vary. No power of this ſort is vouchſafed to the animals; no *choice* left them in the *way* by which they are to attain the end aſſigned them. They act by a law ſcarcely leſs *neceſſary* than that to which inanimate matter is ſubject. Each ſpecies of them proceeds *regularly* and *uniformly* in the *ſame* track. The actions of each individual vary not from thoſe of any other individual of the ſame ſpecies. Each particular bird builds a neſt exactly reſembling that of every other bird of the ſame ſpecies—uſes the ſame food—frequents the ſame haunts. The mode purſued by any one individual of each reſpective ſpecies of living things is invariably purſued by every other individual of the ſame ſpecies, whether it reſpects the continuance of the ſpecies, or the ſupport and preſervation of the individual. Impelled, not by future conſiderations, but by preſent and powerful appetite, there is no danger of their neglecting to proſecute theſe great and *only* ends of their exiſtence

as

as far as reſpects themſelves. The continuance and preſervation of the human kind is provided for in the very ſame manner as in the animal world; but *mere* exiſtence is not the only end intended for God's rational creatures. Animal happineſs reſpects little beyond the *unmoleſted* ſecurity of preſent exiſtence. The happineſs intended for intelligent beings is of a ſuperior kind: it ariſes from the exertion and exerciſe of their *mental* powers; and it as far exceeds that of animals as reaſon is ſuperior to inſtinct *. But the exertion and exerciſe (that is, the uſe and application) of many of theſe faculties is not called forth by the powerful voice of preſent neceſſity, but they are made ſubject to human choice, and dependent upon human will. And it is this gift of liberty, and the power of contemplating his own faculties and ſituation †, which make man a rational and a moral agent; becauſe from one or the other of theſe two conſiderations all human *obligations* ariſe ‡.

The faculties of the human mind are as diſtinct from each other as the ſenſes of the human body;

*. As inſtinct implies no variety, it admits (in the ſame ſpecies) of no diſplay of powers.

† By the ſituation of man, we mean the relations he ſtands in to other beings, whether poſſeſſed of intelligence or only of ſenſation.

‡ By obligation, is meant a ſtate of mind perceiving the reaſons for acting or for abſtaining from acting; and the obligation is called *moral* or *prudential* as theſe reaſons are taken from conſiderations of *rectitude* or *utility*.

and the knowledge received by each faculty varies ſcarcely leſs than the ideas received by each ſenſe. By conſidering the manner in which theſe faculties of the mind act, we ſhall underſtand the nature of the knowledge acquired by them; juſt as, by conſidering the manner in which the ſenſes of the body operate, we underſtand the *nature* of the ideas admitted through them.

The human mind is capable of examining and contemplating all the various faculties men are poſſeſſed of with as great accuracy as any other ſubject, perhaps with greater; becauſe we *experience* in ourſelves the particular mode of their reſpective operations *, and are, in conſequence, as *conſcious* of their diſtinct nature, as we are *conſcious* of our own exiſtence, or *experience* our own identity.

If we turn our attention to the operations of our own minds, we ſhall find ourſelves endued with

I. Powers;

II. Diſpoſitions; and

III. Both united.

We may reckon our mental powers,

1. Intelligence, or the powers of the underſtanding;
2. Will, or the power of choice;
3. Senſation, or the power of receiving ideas through the ſenſes.

To theſe we may add,

4. Diſpoſitions, *i. e.* ſtates of mind, *viz.* affections and paſſions.
5. The moral ſenſe, in which both are united.

* See Eſſay III.

The

The operations of the intellectual powers are diſtinguiſhed by the names of *attention*, *conſideration*, *judgement*, *memory*, *imagination*, *invention*. All theſe depend upon our ability to *form*, *compare*, *combine*, *ſeparate*, and *recall*, our *ideas*; to *which* the operations of the intellectual powers are wholly confined. By means of theſe we are enabled to diſcover the agreement or diſagreement of ideas; to perceive, reflect upon, and conſider, the relations interceding between them. It is in conſequence of theſe operations that we acquire *knowledge*; for, by knowledge we mean the perception of the relation between ideas: and the purſuit and progreſs of knowledge conſiſt in diſcovering and tracing theſe relations in order to aſcertain *truth*: by truth we mean the *certainty* of this knowledge. The exiſtence of relation neceſſarily implies *more* ideas than one: a ſingle idea, therefore, can have no relation; nor can truth exiſt where there is only *one* idea.

Ideas then, whether *formed* by our own minds from *within*, or *introduced* into them through the ſenſes from without, or *excited* in them by words with whoſe ſignification we are *already* acquainted, are the materials and foundation of all our knowledge.

We muſt however obſerve, that, if the ideas are *indiſtinct* whoſe relations are to furniſh us with knowledge, it is as impoſſible that we ſhould have a *clear* view of theſe relations, as it is that we ſhould have a *clear* view of objects which are inveloped in a fog, or are beyond the reach of diſtinct viſion;

and the knowledge received by such imperfect view must, like the ideas upon which it is founded, be indistinct and confused, *i. e. uncertain* also. Truth, therefore, can never be collected from such ideas. The certainty of knowledge must depend upon the clearness of our ideas, just as the distinctness (*i. e.* the certainty) of images presented to our minds through the sight depends upon the accuracy of our view.

Now, the clearness of our ideas depends upon the nature of our ideas themselves, *i. e.* upon the manner in which they are received.

All the ideas of the human mind are either,

1. Such as are *formed* by our intellectual powers;

2. Such as are *received*, through the *senses* of the body, from the material world about us or from living beings; or they are,

3. Such *abstract* ideas as are formed by the mind from *partial* considerations of ideas introduced through the senses, or arising from the relations of intelligent beings. These latter ideas are usually called MIXED MODES.

1. The ideas *formed* by our intellectual powers are the mere creatures of the mind, the offspring of the imagination: the language concerning them is, "conceive so and so." These ideas *are*, and *must* be, the *same* in all mankind: they are not only the same; they are *equally* clear and distinct in all men. The relations existing between these ideas are, and must also be, equally clear; for these relations arise out of the formation, or conception, of the original idea;

idea; and therefore all men *muſt*, and in fact *do*, agree in the truths which ariſe from the knowledge of theſe relations. There is no difference in opinion reſpecting the validity of Euclid's demonſtrations, or the certainty of his propoſitions. When you bid a man *conceive* a curve of ſuch a ſort that a *point* can be taken within the curve equidiſtant from every part of ſuch curve, you include in your conception or formation of this curve all the properties of the circle: and, when you deſcribe the diameter as a right line paſſing from one ſide of the curve to the other, and drawn through the *point* aforeſaid, whoever underſtands theſe words ſees immediately that the diameter *is*, and *muſt* be, double the radius. Theſe ideas, formed by the mind itſelf, have no archetype: the figures deſigned to illuſtrate mathematical propoſitions, by aiding the imagination, are drawn from the original conception, not the conception taken from any archetype*; and, as all *ideal* images are formed through the ſight, were mathematical ideas formed from an archetype, blind perſons would be incapable of mathematical reaſoning; but it is well known ſome of the cleareſt reaſoners upon theſe ſubjects never enjoyed the benefit of ſight. The words alſo, annexed to theſe ideas formed by the mind, are, from the nature of the ideas, as diſtinct in their meaning as the ideas are clear in themſelves; for, they are merely the names of ſimple

* See Beddoes's Obſervations upon the Nature of Demonſtrative Evidence.

ideas: and when an idea which is not compounded of other ideas, and conſequently has no parts, is itſelf clearly aſcertained, no other obſcurity can ariſe reſpecting its name, or the ſound of the letters expreſſing it, but a miſtake of the name, *i. e.* the application of a wrong name to it, a miſtake of all others moſt eaſy to be detected.

But when names are applied to complex ideas, unleſs the *number* and kind of the ideas connected together are *diſtinctly* aſcertained, much obſcurity and confuſion may ariſe from an inattention to the ideas included under the name; that is, from comprehending more or fewer ideas under the *ſame* name by different perſons, or by the ſame perſon at *different* times: and, when names are annexed to *ideal* images, theſe names will excite *true* ideal images, *i. e.* images perfectly reſembling the archetype in all who *have* received ſuch images through the ſight; but they will *not* excite any clear or diſtinct images in the minds of thoſe who have never ſeen the original archetype: thus—

When God thought fit to inſtruct Moſes in the particular manner of building the tabernacle, and conſtructing the various utenſils for the ſervice of it, it ſhould ſeem this inſtruction was not given in words, which in this caſe would have conveyed no clear ideas, but in the only way in which it could be *fully* and *clearly* underſtood, viz. by ſhewing to Moſes in the mount the PATTERNS of every thing he was to make, Exod. xxv, 40. In like manner—

When

When Paul had received ideas in the third heaven, with which he was before unacquainted, and which therefore no words could convey to others, he mentions the fact, but does not attempt to convey that information which himſelf knew and ſays was *impoſſible*.

Words in no caſe convey *original* ideas; they may excite in the mind of the hearer ſuch ideas, or *ideal* images, as have been before received; or perſons may be directed by words in what manner certain ideas may be acquired. The African prince, who could not believe that water was ever ſolid enough to bear an elephant, ſhould have been ſent to Greenland. It is to convey ideal images with greater accuracy than can be done by verbal deſcriptions, by ſimilies or metaphors, that recourſe is had to paintings where the original objects cannot be ſeen.

Every body knows that words, whether preſented to the eye in letters, or to the ear in ſounds, are *arbitrary* ſigns of our ideas. They have, they can have, no *neceſſary* connection with each other, no other connection than what ariſes from common uſe. The preciſion of their ſignification depends upon the attention of thoſe who uſe them, who apply them with care to convey what themſelves mean with exactneſs. There is little danger of miſtake in the names of ſimple ideas, or of ideal images, introduced into the mind through thoſe ſenſes whoſe operation (when not obſtructed by any impediment) ſeems moſt uniform and regular in the

generality of men: but, when theſe ideas are of a more complex nature (*e. g.* mixed modes), being compounded of many other ideas, or have a leſs ſimple origin, being collected from the actions or relations of intelligent beings to each other, or to creatures endowed with ſenſation, it often happens, and muſt happen, that men either attend not with exactneſs to the ideas combined, and in conſequence combine inconſiſtent ideas*; or they differ about the *propriety* of the combination, about the particular ideas that ſhould or ſhould not be

* Thus, Joſeph Milner's definition of Juſtification is *unintelligible*, becauſe he joins *inconſiſtent* ideas. "By the doctrine of juſtification," he ſays (ſee a pamphlet intituled "Some remarkable Paſſages in the Life of William Howard," p. 43), "is meant, the particular method laid down in Scripture of *honourably* ACQUITTING *ſinful* men before their God, THROUGH the *atonement* and *righteouſneſs* of Jeſus Chriſt." He joins here two ideas which are utterly inconſiſtent: for, *ſinful* men, ſo far from being *honourably* ACQUITTED, cannot be *acquitted* at all: to be acquitted a man muſt be *innocent*. Nor can an innocent man be acquitted upon account of, for the ſake of, or through, the doings or ſufferings of another. It is upon account of his *own* innocence ONLY, and upon *no other* account whatſoever, that a man can be *honourably* acquitted. In human courts, indeed, men are ſometimes acquitted for want of evidence to convict them, although there is no doubt of their guilt; but *ſuch* acquittance is never reckoned *honourable*. That acquittance *alone* is *honourable* where there is *no ſuſpicion* of guilt. A man who is found guilty—a ſinful man—may be pardoned for the ſake of another; but this is *not* an *acquittal*, much leſs an *honourable* acquittal.

admitted

admitted into the more complex idea, and conveyed under the name aſſigned; or they change the number of ideas, ſometimes including more, ſometimes fewer, or ſometimes different ideas under the ſame word.

Theſe, and many other occaſions of miſtake, ariſe from the imperfection of human language: and theſe verbal imperfections give riſe to much miſunderſtanding, and to moſt of the controverſies in divinity. For where the ideas are perfectly clear, as in the caſe of ſuch as are formed in the mind, ALL men *muſt* and *do* agree in the relations aſcribed to them, as was before obſerved. And, had the knowledge of Chriſtianity, which was miraculouſly revealed to the apoſtles by the Holy Spirit, been revealed to them through the medium of language, it muſt undoubtedly, *without* a *ſecond* miracle, have partaken of all the imperfections of verbal communications. They who received *ſuch* communication *immediately* from God muſt, in all likelihood, have differed about the meaning of the words delivered to them, as their followers ſoon did, to whom *no miraculous* communication was vouchſafed: while the apoſtles themſelves, who were inſtructed by the Holy Spirit, perfectly and conſtantly *agreed* about the *matter* and *meaning* of *his* inſtruction.

ESSAY

ESSAY I.

UPON

THE EXTRAORDINARY OPERATIONS OF THE HOLY SPIRIT.

BY conſidering the PURPOSE, for which the extraordinary gifts of the Holy Spirit were imparted to the apoſtles, and his effects upon their minds, we ſhall be enabled to collect with preciſion the NATURE of his extraordinary operations.

There is a wonderful ſimilarity, not only in the ordinary, but alſo in the extraordinary, effects of the divine adminiſtration; or, if you pleaſe, in thoſe effects which from their rareneſs we call miraculous, and thoſe which from their frequency we conſider as common.

Our firſt parent was produced in a way very different from that of all his poſterity. He never paſſed through the ſtate of infancy; nor was taught by that great univerſal maſter EXPERIENCE. He was brought into the world in poſſeſſion of his full powers

powers and his allotted portion of knowledge. His deſcendants are weak and helpleſs in the beginning of life; have to acquire their knowledge by ſlow experience; and aſcend to their limited degree of ſtrength and knowledge by tedious and repeated ſteps *.

In like manner, the firſt teachers of Chriſtianity acquired not by the uſe of their natural faculties the knowledge of thoſe doctrines they were appointed to preach. The minds of the apoſtles ſeem to have been entirely *paſſive* in the reception of this extraordinary information †. The knowledge of the wiſdom of God in the myſtery of the goſpel;

* Ogden's Sermons, Vol. I. f. ix. p. 249.

† It ſhould ſeem, when the information miraculouſly given reſpected a more extenſive concern than that of a ſingle individual, this information was poured into the minds of the receivers in a manner of which we can form no conception; as in the *general* inſpiration of the prophets, and of the apoſtles upon the day of Pentecoſt. But, when this information reſpected only a ſingle perſon, it was given in a way indeed no leſs miraculous, though apparently more analogous to the ways in which men uſually receive knowledge, *viz.* by appearances or by words; though, whether theſe notices were admitted through the ſenſes of the body, or impreſſed upon the imagination of the mind, we may not often be more able to tell, than Paul was able to tell whether he was in the body or out of the body when he was caught up to the third heaven, 2 Cor. xii. 2, 3. See 1 Sam. iii. Acts viii. 26, 29; ix. 4, 10; x. 3; xi. 7; xii. 7; xiii. 2; xviii. 9; xxii. 18; xxiii. 11; xxvii. 23.

that

that hidden wiſdom which God ordained before the beginning of the world, according to his own eternal purpoſe which he purpoſed in Chriſt Jeſus * (a purpoſe hidden from all mankind till brought to light by the miraculous promulgation of the goſpel); a wiſdom which none of the princes of this world (the Jewiſh Sanhedrim, men qualified to reaſon and to underſtand), knew or were able to diſcover; this knowledge did God give in an *unuſual* and *miraculous* manner to the apoſtles ONLY. It was no diſcovery of their own, brought about by the cuſtomary uſe of their *natural* faculties. This MYSTERY in Chriſt was not made known in other ages (for it had been *purpoſely* hid from ages and generations, Col. i. 26) to any of the ſons of men, AS (*i. e.* in the manner) it was then revealed, *not* unto ALL men (for that was the buſineſs and office of thoſe to whom it was miraculouſly revealed), but unto the holy apoſtles and prophets by the SPIRIT; that, *through* them, God's way for the redemption of mankind might be known upon earth, his ſaving health among all nations.

Now, we may obſerve,

I. That this knowledge, thus miraculouſly vouchſafed to the apoſtles, was the *primary* qualification for their office as the general teachers of mankind; as diſpenſers of that word through which all ſucceeding profeſſors of Chriſtianity were to attain the

* Eph. iii. 11.

knowledge

knowledge of ſalvation. For, unleſs they were to teach others, of what *particular* uſe was the gift of tongues?

II. Not only the knowledge of the doctrines of Chriſtianity, a *ſenſe* that *this* knowledge was *miraculouſly* conveyed to them from God himſelf was neceſſary to convince them of its *authority*, viz. that it *really* was a divine revelation: and this ſenſe we find the apoſtles had, though we are ignorant in what way it was given them. Thus Paul ſays, (1 Cor. vii. 10,) NOT I, *but* the *Lord:* at the 12th verſe he diſclaims all divine authority, and ſays, I SPEAK, *not* the *Lord:* at the 25th verſe he does the ſame: but at the 40th verſe he leaves the matter *doubtful*; he only *thinks*, he is *not ſure* (as in the firſt inſtance), that he had this authority. So the apoſtles knew when the Holy Ghoſt *confirmed* the dictates of their *own* underſtanding, Acts xv, 28. See alſo Acts x. 19; xi. 12; xiii. 2, 4; Gal. ii. 2; Eph. iii. 3. Sometimes the information communicated by the Holy Spirit was general, Acts xx. 22, 23; but, of whatever ſort it was, they were never backward in declaring it. Poſſibly the *ſenſe* that this knowledge was miraculouſly given to them, and the *ſenſe* that they poſſeſſed the power of working miracles, might be communicated in the ſame way.

III. The next qualification was UNIFORMITY in this knowledge; a poſſeſſion of it without *difference* or *inequality*. For, had one known *more* and another *leſs*, or had one been made acquainted with *one* doctrine and another with *another*, it might have

have occaſioned endleſs difficulties and diſputes, both amongſt them and amongſt their followers. As it was, they were ſufficiently ready, from the common prejudices of our corrupt and fooliſh attachments of our weak nature, to divide into parties. One was of Paul, another of Apollos, a third of Cephas, and a fourth of Chriſt;—juſt as ſimple perſons do now. How much more, had there been plain and remarkable differences in the original knowledge of each!

IV. This knowledge was given at ONCE, and *not* by *degrees*. Upon the deſcent of the Holy Ghoſt the apoſtles became *ſuddenly* acquainted with the whole œconomy of the goſpel. It appears from the ſermon of St. Peter, delivered in the inſtant, that that this information was NOT *gradual*. It was poured into their minds in a manner of which we have *no* conception *. What little information they received from their maſter while on earth, reſpecting this matter, might be very gradual, in condeſcention to their prejudices; and the manner in which it was moſt frequently conveyed to them, *viz.* in parables †, ſhews that it was ſo. But the miraculous knowledge received upon the day of Pentecoſt, inſtead of increaſing by imperceptible degrees like the early dawn, burſt *ſuddenly* and *fully* into their minds, like the returning light of the ſun, after a total eclipſe, from perfect darkneſs to meridian ſplendor.

* See Note †, p. 34.

† Powell's Diſcourſes, D. xiv. p. 223, 224.

V. The *extraordinary* effects of the Holy Spirit came not by the *will*, nor by the desire, of such as received them *; but holy men spake and acted as they were moved by the Holy Ghost. Neither the knowledge bestowed nor the abilities given were the effects of their own faculties, or the fruits of their own wishes. The one and the other resembled the wind, of which we know not whence it cometh or whither it goeth. These effects were sudden and irresistible; not to be attained or excited, directed or prevented, by human strength and skill:—not so the nature and effect of his ordinary operations †.

VI. The knowledge given to the apostles was such as no human faculties could discover; as clearly appears from the truths revealed, and the declarations of Scripture respecting them ‡. And this circumstance is an additional proof of the divinity of revelation. For, a revelation of truths which the human faculties *could* discover, would have rendered the claim to a divine origin suspicious; because God is not wont to do any thing which is useless or superfluous: and a revelation which men *cannot* understand is, in fact, no revelation at all §.

When, therefore, it is said ‖ (to serve a party purpose) that Paul was favoured with more abundant

* Mark xiii. 11.

† Luke xi. 13; Acts vii. 51; Eph. v. 30; 1 Thess. v. 19; 1 Tim. iv. 14; 2 Tim. i. 6.

‡ Rom. xv. 25, 26; 1 Cor. ii. 7, 8; Gal. i. 11, 12; Eph. iii. 3, 9; Col. i. 20.

§ Cardiphonia, vol. I. p. 159, 167, 189.

‖ Milner's Observations upon Ludlam's Theological Essays.

revelations

revelations than the reſt of the apoſtles, the fact may be true, but it is nothing to the purpoſe; becauſe Paul received not only the knowledge of the *doctrines*, in common with the other apoſtles, but alſo the knowledge of many *facts*, by revelation, which the other apoſtles received by the information of their ſenſes, and to which they appeal: "We teſtify," ſay they, "what we have *ſeen* with our eyes, what we have looked upon, and what our hands have handled;" we who went in and out, and did eat and drink with the Lord Jeſus. But Paul appeals to revelation for the truth of ſuch facts as he relates, 1 Cor. xi. 23; ſee alſo Acts xx. 35. He received likewiſe, in the ſame ſupernatural way, information and directions concerning himſelf perſonally; perhaps more than any other of the apoſtles, having a more extenſive province allotted to him, Acts ix. 15; Rom. i. 5; ſee alſo Acts ix. 6; xviii. 9; xxii. 18; xxvii. 23, 24; Gal. ii. 2. Hence might ariſe his apprehenſions leſt theſe numerous communications, many of them directed to his perſonal ſafety, might adminiſter cauſe for pride, as if he were the peculiar favourite of Heaven.

When it is farther ſaid that Paul was favoured with *clearer* diſcoveries of the myſtery of the goſpel, I apprehend this is *gratis dictum* for the ſame purpoſe;—becauſe I do not find that Paul had any revelations of doctrines not made known to the other apoſtles; or that were either more particular, or more important, or at all different, from what the other apoſtles received: nor do I find that he claims

any ſuperiority upon this account. He ſays, indeed, he was in nothing *behind* the very chiefeſt of the apoſtles; but he no where ſays he was in *any* thing a whit *before* them. He does, to be ſure, thank God that he was enabled to ſpeak with tongues more than any, or perhaps all of them; but this, though it might be a mark of ſuperior favour, is no mark of ſuperior knowledge in the truths of revelation.

St. Paul might perhaps have ſome wonderful diſcoveries made to him when he was caught up to (ἕως, as far as) the third heaven. But theſe diſcoveries, whatever they might be, remained with him, and went no farther. His information, indeed, was of ſo ſingular a kind, that he could not tell whether the ſayings (τὰ ῥήματα) which he heard were communicated to him through the ſenſes of the body or the faculties of the ſoul.

Excepting, therefore, this *peculiar* caſe of St. Paul, we have no reaſon to ſuppoſe that any other of the apoſtles learned *all* they knew from revelation*. God does nothing in vain: we are not therefore to imagine, that the knowledge of ſuch truths as they could attain by the uſe of their natural faculties was imparted to them miraculouſly; and we have as little reaſon to ſuppoſe, that ſuch truths as men can collect from the careful ſtudy of the Holy Scriptures are ever NOW made known to

* Gilpin's Expoſition of the New Teſtament, General Preface, p. xxviii.

them

them by IMMEDIATE revelation, or by any SUPERNATURAL ways, from God himſelf. And, when the apoſtles had this great authority, they were no more backward to declare it than they were to confeſs when they had it not. They had indeed ſome *diſputes* and *debates* amongſt themſelves; but theſe did not immediately relate to the truths they learned from inſpiration, concerning which, it ſhould ſeem, they had neither DOUBT nor DISAGREEMENT.

ESSAY II.

UPON THE ORDINARY OPERATIONS OF THE HOLY SPIRIT.

BY conſidering the *ends* for which the *extraordinary* gifts of the Holy Spirit were imparted to the *apoſtles*, and the account of His effects upon their minds as related in Scripture, we were enabled to collect the NATURE of His *extraordinary* operations. In the ſame manner, by conſidering the *ends* for which the *ordinary* gifts of the Holy Spirit are promiſed to *all* Chriſtians, and alſo the *conſtitution* of the human mind, upon which we are told He exerts His effects (for we learn from Scripture that God worketh *in* us to *will* and to *do*), we ſhall be enabled to collect the nature of His *ordinary* operations.

The end of the extraordinary operations of the Holy Spirit was the qualification of the apoſtles to be the diſpenſers of God's word to all mankind *.

* Mark xvi. 15; Luke xxiv. 47, 48.

The knowledge and the powers vouchſafed to them for this purpoſe were ſo little connected with the private benefit of the individual, that we are told many, who poſſeſſed theſe gifts in an eminent degree, ſhould yet be excluded from that ſalvation they were enabled to preach. In order to preach this ſalvation, a *new* and extraordinary knowledge was communicated to them, by ways no leſs new and extraordinary; a knowledge far above the reach of the human faculties, and to which not only they, but all mankind, were utter ſtrangers from the creation of the world, excepting the little imparted for the purpoſe of prophecy. This *ignorance* of man was the *deſignation* of God himſelf. It was in the WISDOM of God that the world by *wiſdom* knew *not* God. It was the ſpecial, the wiſe, the expreſs appointment of God, that mankind ſhould not be able to diſcover, by the uſe of their *natural* faculties (thoſe faculties which he had given them), that great myſtery of God in Chriſt reconciling the world unto himſelf. For, if the ignorance ſpoken of in *this* text meant the ignorance of mankind reſpecting God as *Creator*, *Governor*, and *Preſerver*, of the world, St. Paul would contradict himſelf; becauſe he ſays expreſsly that the world, the *heathen* world, *knew* God, but, *not liking* to RETAIN him in their knowledge, they glorified him not as God, neither were thankful for the benefits they received from him; and THEREFORE they were without excuſe. But men's ignorance of God as redeemer of the world, *i. e.* their ignorance of the goſpel diſpenſation, before it

was

was miraculouſly made known to the apoſtles, is never conſidered in Scripture as *criminal*. And how ſhould it? ſince it was by the ſpecial appointment of God himſelf that this wonderful diſpenſation ſhould remain a MYSTERY, till, in the fullneſs of time, the ſeaſon came for its miraculous diſcovery to the apoſtles, and *through them* to ALL mankind.

The ordinary operations of the Spirit are deſigned for a quite different purpoſe, and therefore we are not to wonder that they are ſo very different in their nature. They are ſolely intended for the benefit, that is, the ſanctification of each individual; for the amendment of his moral character; for the renewal of the human mind in knowledge (the knowledge communicated through the apoſtles) after the image of the Creator. The extraordinary operations of the Holy Ghoſt are the *manifeſtation* of that ſpirit, by which (manifeſtation) we perceive that the SUFFICIENCY of the apoſtles to preach the goſpel was of God. The ordinary operations of the Holy Ghoſt are the manifeſtation of that ſpirit, by which (manifeſtation) ALL Chriſtians are *enabled* to receive that knowledge which the apoſtles were empowered to convey to them; and to put off the old man, which is corrupt after the deceitful luſts (the depraved character introduced by the fall), and to put on the new man (the regenerate character reſtored by the Holy Ghoſt), which, after God, is created in righteouſneſs and true holineſs. Now, this ſpirit is not confined ſolely to a *few*, for the work of the miniſtry, but is given to *every* man to profit withal;

withal; not, as in the former caſe, in EQUAL meaſure, but to one after this manner, and to another after that; for every man hath his proper allotment, according to that meaſure which God, who divideth to every man according to the good pleaſure of his will, hath diſtributed of his grace.

But theſe two different operations of the Holy Spirit differ alſo materially in another point. It is neceſſary that thoſe, to whom a revelation is made *immediately* from God, ſhould not only perfectly underſtand what is revealed to them, but, alſo, that it is so revealed. Without this (additional) information, the truths vouchſafed to them would *only* ſtand upon the ſame footing as all other *human* truth; for, it is the knowledge that theſe truths are *immediately* derived from God that gives to them divine authority: and, were the receivers ignorant of this derivation, they would alſo be ignorant of their own office, and of the proper mode of executing it. But, in the ordinary operations of the Spirit, it is by no means neceſſary for the ſanctification of any man that he ſhould *know* either *when* he has the aſſiſtance of the Spirit, or in *what manner* that aſſiſtance is adminiſtered unto him. It is ſufficient if the *certainty* of this aſſiſtance, at *ſome time* and in *ſome manner*, is declared by thoſe to whom the revelation was originally made. An apprehenſion in men that they know theſe two circumſtances may poſſibly be attended with much miſchief; while it is utterly impoſſible, that any the leaſt benefit can be derived from ſuch knowledge.

Men,

Men, in conſequence of the fall, are ſaid to be alienated from the life of God through the ignorance that is in them, becauſe of the blindneſs of their heart *. The word here tranſlated blindneſs means *calloſity*, want of feeling; what this ſame apoſtle elſewhere calls being *paſt* feeling †, having their conſciences *ſeared* with a hot iron ‡. This fault cannot reſpect the underſtanding; for, *feeling* has nothing to do with *knowledge*: it reſpects the moral ſenſe. Blindneſs, therefore, in this place cannot mean ignorance. The apoſtle would hardly ſay, that they were alienated from the life of God, through the *ignorance* that is *in* them, becauſe of the *ignorance* of their heart. This at beſt would be tautology, if, indeed, it is at all intelligible. Now, both this ignorance and this blindneſs, *i. e.* want of feeling, are repreſented in Scripture as exceedingly blamable; they are the effect of *choice*, that is, of the will under the bias of corrupt affections. But, if men were abſolutely *unable* to attain ſuch knowledge as is required of them, or were created without this ſenſe of feeling, the want of this knowledge and this feeling could not be criminal. But, whatever expreſſions are uſed to ſhew the want of either, they are ſuch as ſhew it to be wholly voluntary. And ſo Paul ſays of the heathen world, that they did not *like*, they did not chuſe, to retain God in their knowledge §: and to this wicked choice, this

* Eph. iv. 18. † Ib. 19. ‡ 1 Tim. iv. 2.
§ Rom. i. 28.

volun-

voluntary refuſal, he aſcribes that exceſſive degree of wickedneſs into which they fell, not to the "injury their ſouls had *received* from the *original apoſtacy*." Oh! but this wicked choice, this voluntary neglect, was in conſequence of the original apoſtacy. To be ſure it was. But a *want* of faculties, and a *neglect* to *uſe* them, are very different matters.

One effect of the extraordinary operations of the Spirit was to give *original* knowledge to thoſe who were to be teachers of ALL mankind. One effect of the ordinary operations of the Spirit is to promote the ſanctification of *each* individual. Knowledge can be *forced* upon the human mind by him who made it *. A man cannot help ſeeing with his eyes if they are open, or hearing with his ears if they are not ſtopped. In certain caſes the perceptions of ſenſe are irreſiſtible. But ſanctification cannot be forced upon any man; he cannot be made holy or good by *violence*. The very idea of holineſs or goodneſs is, that it is *voluntary*, the ſpontaneous effect of the will, the ſubject of free choice, preferring what is good and excellent in *itſelf*, without regard to circumſtances, to what we know by the faculties God has given us to be wrong, and wicked, and deteſtable. Now, as original holineſs and goodneſs muſt be voluntary to be acceptable unto God, the departure from holineſs muſt be voluntary to be criminal. For the like reaſon, a *return* to holineſs

* Numb. xi. 25, 26; xxii, 38. 1 Sam. x. 10, 11; xviii, 10; xix. 23, 24; 1 Kings xiii. 21.

muſt

muſt be voluntary. Take away freedom from intelligent agents, and they ceaſe to be reſponſible, juſt as much as if you take away intelligence. The poor idiot who never had, and the poor lunatic who has loſt, the uſe of reaſon, can no more be anſwerable for their actions than the brute creation. And why not? Becauſe they are incapable of law. And, where there is no law, or, what is juſt the ſame thing, where there can be *no* knowledge of law, both reaſon and revelation aſſure us there can be no tranſgreſſion. For the ſame reaſon, creatures, who have no (freedom of) will, can neither obey or diſobey any law; and this impoſſibility makes ſuch creatures incapable of reſponſibility.

The fall of man was a *voluntary* departure from holineſs; a compliance of the will, with the ſolicitations of *wrong* affections. A deſire to be as gods (in oppoſition to an expreſs command), excited by the tempter, urged our firſt parents to that act of diſobedience which they knew to be ſinful. The ſolicitations of *right* affections can alone prevail upon men to *deſire* a return to that ſtate of obedience from which they have departed. In what manner this may be brought about we ſhall ſee, if we conſider the *effects* of the ordinary operations of the Holy Spirit. To underſtand theſe more exactly, we muſt conſider that conſtitution of mind which our Creator has given us; for, upon theſe various faculties of the mind, we are told the operations of the Spirit are exerted. Work out your own ſalvation, ſays

ſays the inſpired apoſtle, becauſe it is GOD which *worketh in* you to WILL and to DO.

When man turns his thoughts upon himſelf, he finds his Creator has beſtowed upon him various mental faculties: and he is as *conſcious* of the *diſtinct* nature of theſe ſeveral faculties, and he *experiences* as *clearly* the mode of their reſpective operations, as he is *conſcious* of his own exiſtence, or *experiences* his own identity.

Theſe qualifications may be diſtinguiſhed into

I. Powers;

II. Diſpoſitions; *i. e.* ſtates of mind; and

III. Both united.

We may reckon our mental powers,

1. Intelligence, or the powers of the underſtanding;
2. Will, or the power of choice;
3. Senſation, or the power of receiving ideas through the ſenſes.

To theſe we may add,

4. Diſpoſitions, *i. e.* ſtates of mind, *viz.* affections and paſſions.
5. The moral ſenſe, in which both are united.

All theſe faculties are perfectly and plainly diſtinct from each other.

The intelligence of man enables him to *form*, *combine*, *ſeparate*, *compare*, and *recall*, his ideas; to diſcover their agreement or diſagreement; to perceive, reflect upon, and conſider, the relations interceding between them; and hence to judge what will promote or prevent that pleaſure or pain which his ſenſes enable him to perceive, and his affections

fections incite him to chuſe or avoid; *i. e.* to exerciſe his will, and to act in conſequence of ſuch determination.

Now we muſt obſerve, that the *degree* of theſe various qualifications is various, according to that meaſure which the Giver of them has thought proper to allot to each individual. To ſome they are given in a greater, to others in a leſs degree. But not only the *quantity*, the *quality* of theſe qualifications is variouſly allotted. To one are given powers more adapted to acquire knowledge in one ſubject, to another in a different ſubject, what we call a TURN. The like is obſervable in the powers of the body; a readineſs, a dexterity, an addreſs, in ſome ſorts of actions more than in others; what is called a KNACK.

But, though mankind are liberally furniſhed with ſuch wonderful faculties by their Maker, the uſe, *i. e.* the employment and application, of theſe faculties, is put entirely in their *own* power, and left ſubject to their *own will*; for in this conſiſts their freedom. They may, if they pleaſe, neglect to ſtir up the *gift* that is *in* them *; or they may abuſe it to purpoſes for which it was never intended †. This poſſibility of abuſe ſeems neceſſarily to attend the great and valuable gift of liberty.

Still farther.—Not only the *uſe* of theſe faculties, that degree of energy and perfection, whatever it be, which ariſes from the exerciſe of them, is equally

* 2 Tim. i. 6. † Rom. i. 27.

left

left in their own power, and dependant upon their own will; every one is aware, that by repeated exerciſe they may go on from ſtrength to ſtrength.

We may *now* ſee what *room* there is for, what reaſon to entreat, the aſſiſtance of the Holy Spirit, even though we ſhould ſuppoſe, that He does NOT convey in *theſe days ſuch* knowledge to the underſtanding as is UNATTAINABLE by the uſe of our natural faculties. His influence upon the *mind* may be not leſs neceſſary, from the corruption of our nature, than deſirable; not leſs efficacious than imperceptible. He may increaſe men's attention, activity, diligence; but this is NOT to GIVE knowledge, though it be inevitably to *lead* to it. He may ſupply inclinations for cloſer, abilities for more unwearied, application. He may give quicker apprehenſions, clearer judgements, diſpoſitions more inclined to receive *, faculties more adapted to learn, memories more firm in retaining, divine truth. But is this either to give *original* knowledge, or to confine the influence of the Holy Spirit *wholly* to the affections?

There is, therefore, no ground to affirm "that thoſe who *deny* the gift of *original* knowledge *ſince* the apoſtles time, *i. e.* of ſuch knowledge as is unattainable by the uſe of our natural faculties, DENY ALSO the aſſiſtance of the Holy Spirit, or confine it WHOLLY to the affections;" that, "according to the notion of *ſuch* perſons, prayer for the aſſiſtance of

* Matt. xi. 14; xix 11; John xii. 48; 1 Cor. ii. 14.

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the Holy Spirit is *abſurd* and *preſumptuous*; and that, inſtead of encouraging Chriſtians to pray for his aſſiſtance, we ſhould rather tell them they have nothing to do but to ſtudy their Bibles."

Thus, then, good men may be led by the Spirit, and yet not be able to diſtinguiſh *his* influence from the workings of their *own* minds; may be ſafely and ſurely conducted in the way to heaven, without diſcerning the hand that guides them. God may work in them to *will* and to *do*, and yet they themſelves not diſcover what are the efforts of human weakneſs, and what the operations of almighty power. Nor can you diſtinguiſh perceptions excited by the (ordinary) effects of the Spirit from ſuch as are merely *rational*; unleſs God gives you abilities ſo to do, as he did to the apoſtles *.

In the laſt place it ſhould be noticed, that, *whenever* knowledge *itſelf*, *not* the *means* of attaining it, was communicated from God *immediately* and *miraculouſly* to his creatures, he is never ſaid in Scripture to *open* their *hearts* or their *underſtandings*. When a perfect knowledge of the Chriſtian diſpenſation was given to the apoſtles upon the day of Pentecoſt, not one word is ſaid of opening their hearts or their underſtandings to enable them to receive the knowledge imparted to them. When Paul received this knowledge from God himſelf †, he ſays nothing at all about his heart or his underſtanding being opened to qualify him for the reception of this informa-

* 1 Cor. vii. † Gal. i. 12; Eph. iii. 3.

tion; yet ſurely no man's heart or underſtanding was ever more ſtrongly ſhut by paſſion or principle *. This expreſſion is never uſed unleſs the perſons influenced are to be enabled to make a *right uſe* of their own faculties in the attainment of the knowledge to be tendered to them. So, when Chriſt opened the underſtandings of the apoſtles †, he neither gave them new faculties nor new perceptions which the words of Scripture were incapable of exciting; nor did he give them knowledge which they were unable to attain by the *right uſe* of their faculties; but he influenced them to attend to and conſider the Scriptures. Thus, when Paul, by an appeal to theſe ſame Scriptures, confounded, and Apollos mightily convinced, the Jews, and ſhewed that Jeſus was (the) Chriſt, we do not read that the hearts or the underſtandings of theſe Jews were miraculouſly opened to underſtand them ‡: and Paul is ſaid to *reaſon* with the Jews out of the Scriptures, and to *open* to them the Scriptures, juſt as our Lord opened the ſame Scriptures to the two diſciples §: both Jeſus and Paul alleging the ſame things; and appealing, *not* to the miracles they wrought (as our Lord did upon other occaſions ‖), but to the prophecies of the Jewiſh Scriptures, as exactly fulfilled in Jeſus: thus both Paul and Jeſus induced their hearers to *attend*; for, the way in which men get

* Acts xxii. 3; xxvi. 11. † Luke xxiv. 45.

‡ Acts ix. 22; xviii. 28.

§ Acts xvii. 2, 3; xviii. 4, 19; Luke xxiv. 32.

‖ Luke vii. 22; John v. 36; x. 25.

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rid of their prejudices is by attention and conſideration. In the ſame manner our Lord opened the heart of Lydia: he influenced her to attend to and conſider the things ſpoken of Paul *. Hence he commands his followers to WATCH as well as pray; to watch againſt the various prejudices which ſo eaſily beſet men; not only prejudices ariſing from paſſion, appetite, deſire, education, authority, but prejudices of attachment to friends on account of learning, piety, &c. attachments much oftener founded in affection and ſimilarity of diſpoſitions than in *reaſon*. Prejudices of *this ſort* ſeem to have ſtrongly influenced St. Paul; and theſe, probably, not a little increaſed by the peculiar nature of the Jewiſh diſpenſation. Nor is there any room to doubt but that intolerance in all its degrees, from the anathema of private bigotry to the ſolemn ſentence of a court, has had its foundation in prejudices of piety, much oftener than many religious perſons are willing to acknowledge.

It may be proper to add, that, if *original* knowledge was communicated to any perſons by divine revelation, while the perſons themſelves remained ignorant of the mode of its communication, that is, of the *ſupernatural* way in which they received ſuch knowledge, one great end of revelation, the aſcertaining the reality of it to the perſons who receive it, would be wholly loſt. And, were men made SENSIBLE of the divine influence *when* God worketh

* Acts xvi. 14.

in them to will and to do, inſtead of exerting their powers, for which exertion this aſſiſtance is made an argument, they would never work at all themſelves, but wait, like the Quakers, till they FELT the impulſe and help of the Spirit.

ESSAY III.

UPON

THE APPLICATION OF EXPERIENCE TO RELIGION.

THE human mind is capable of receiving knowledge in different ways; and each ſort of knowledge takes a different name according to the particular way in which it has been received. Thus we receive knowledge by *Intuition*, *Demonſtration*, *Analogy*, *Information*, *Experience*. Theſe ſorts of knowledge differ from each other both in *kind* and *degree*.

By Intuition is meant the manner in which we become acquainted with the *relations* between ſuch *abſtract* ideas as admit of *immediate* compariſon.

By Demonſtration, the manner in which we become acquainted with the *relations* of ſuch *abſtract* ideas as do *not* admit of *immediate* compariſon.

By Analogy, the manner in which we infer the *probable* exiſtence of ſome *particular* truths from the

certain exiſtence of other truths *ſimilar* to them, the knowledge of which we derive from *experience.*

By Information, the way in which we become acquainted with truth upon the teſtimony of other men.

By EXPERIENCE, the teſtimony of our mental perceptions, or of our corporeal ſenſes. The former of theſe is what we mean by *conſciouſneſs.*

The ſubjects of experience are of courſe confined to

1. The operations of our mental powers; or,

2. The information of our corporeal ſenſes.

The operations of our mental powers are wholly dependent upon our own wills. The continuance of our exiſtence being in no wiſe connected with the exertion or exerciſe of theſe faculties, we can employ or ſuſpend the employment of our *mental* powers *ad libitum.* Not ſo the acts of our *corporeal* ſenſes. They are by no means under the full control of our wills; they are liable to the influence and impreſſion of external objects.

The mental powers, whoſe operations afford matter for experimental knowledge, are either

1. Powers of the underſtanding, relating *wholly* to ideas;

2. Determinations of the will, *i. e.* effects of the power of choice;

3. Diſpoſitions of mind, in conſequence of our own intentions or actions, or of the intentions or actions of other men, *i. e.* affections and paſſions;

And, laſtly, the effects of the moral ſenſe.

The various operations of our mental powers are diſtinguiſhed by the names of *attention, conſideration,*

judgement,

judgement, *memory*, *imagination*, *invention*; all these depend upon our ability to *form*, *compare*, *combine*, *separate*, and *recall*, our ideas.

The knowledge received through the senses of the body is, in a *great measure*, of the sort we call EXPERIMENTAL knowledge: it is the *testimony* of our *own senses*.

Experimental knowledge is, therefore, confined to our *own* perceptions. We cannot experience the mental perceptions or corporeal sensations of *other* men. Our experience is also confined to our own personal presence: we cannot have experimental knowledge of subjects far removed from us by *time* or *place*; events which happened before we were born, or which are to happen after we are dead, cannot be the subject of our (present) experience. For the knowledge of past or future events, or of such as happen in places distant from us, we must be indebted to the information of others; and such knowledge has FAITH, *not* EXPERIENCE, for its foundation.

It follows, that experience is, and can only be, the knowledge of FACTS; of facts which take place within the extent of our own personal presence and observation. The operations of our mental powers, the acts of our corporeal senses, the exertions of our affections and passions, and the changes in our dispositions, are *facts*, and facts only; they are not opinions: and when, in consequence of these facts, we form opinions, the *forming* such opinion is a fact, and, as such, is the subject-matter of expe-

rience. But neither the opinions, nor the affections and paſſions, of *other* men, as exiſting in their minds, can be objects of *our* experience. We may, indeed, experience the facts which follow from ſuch opinions, or ſuch affections and paſſions; and which facts we *believe* to be the outward and viſible ſign of the inward and inviſible operation of the mind: for, of the operations of other men's minds we know nothing; and it is a proof we know nothing, becauſe we are compelled to collect them from their actions.

Having conſidered the *nature* of that *ſort* of knowledge which we call experience, we muſt conſider the *nature* of *religious* truth; becauſe every kind of truth is not the object of experimental knowledge. Thus, the truth of *each ſtep* which leads to the demonſtration of an abſtract propoſition *may* be the object of experimental knowledge; becauſe the truth of each ſtep *may be* an intuitive truth, and intuition is an *act* of the mind; yet the concluſion ariſing from a ſeries of intuitive truths, *i. e.* the demonſtration, is not an intuitive truth; for, if it were, intuition and demonſtration would be the ſame thing. nor can we know *experimentally* that the areas of triangles, ſuppoſe upon the ſame baſe and of the ſame altitude, are equal.

As we know not in what manner the *reality* of *original* revelation is aſcertained to thoſe who receive it *immediately* from God, ſo we know of no other mark than the power of working miracles by which the *reality* of the revelation given to the *original* receivers can be aſcertained to the reſt of mankind. That

the original receivers of the Chriſtian revelation claimed this power appears from their writings; that they really poſſeſſed it muſt be aſcertained, like the reality of all other facts, by human teſtimony. The authenticity of their writings, and the validity of *this* teſtimony, muſt be aſcertained in the *ſame* way that the authenticity of all other writings, and the validity of all other human teſtimony, are. When the reality of the revelation, and the authenticity of the writings containing this revelation, are once eſtabliſhed, the *authority* of the doctrines conveyed follows of courſe.

By the doctrines of Chriſtianity we mean either the truth of ſuch Scripture facts as, *not* admitting *human evidence*, ſtand upon the authority of revelation *only*; or, the *effects* or *conſequences* of ſuch Scripture facts as ſtand upon the authority of human evidence; which effects or conſequences we learn, and *only can* learn, from revelation.

Thus, the Jews who were preſent when Jeſus was brought before Pilate were as competent and as credible witneſſes as the apoſtles themſelves of the abuſes, the inſults, he received; of the cruel mockings which were offered to him; of the cruel ſcourgings he underwent. They could bear teſtimony as well as Peter (1 Ep. v. 1.) to the ſufferings of Chriſt. To the eyes of thoſe who ſurrounded the croſs of our Lord, his death, with all the attendant circumſtances, were events of unqueſtionable certainty. But they could not know from the *teſtimony* of their *ſenſes*, that all this was done for us men, and

for

for our ſalvation, and that by his ſtripes we are healed. What they ſaw could not inform them, any more than it did his diſciples, that by his death he had overcome death, and opened to repenting and believing ſinners the gate of everlaſting life; that all ſuch ſinners were waſhed from the guilt of all their offences in that blood which they ſaw ſtreaming from his wounds; that, he whom they had juſt beheld arraigned, condemned, and executed as a malefactor, ſhould hereafter appear, in all the pomp of heavenly magnificence, the ſovereign judge of all mankind; whom, in conſequence of theſe ſufferings and this dignity, ALL men ſhould be called upon to honour, even as they are (and were always) called upon by *His* character (Acts xvii. 24, Rom. i. 20, 21.) to honour the Father.

As the *effects* of theſe facts could *not* be objects of experience to thoſe who were eye or ear witneſſes of the facts themſelves, ſo neither can they be objects of experience to us, nor to any, till they (theſe predicted effects) actually take place. When therefore we are told that believers can ſpeak of Chriſt's power, faithfulneſs, and love *; of his ability to ſave †; of his power, mercy, &c. ‡; from their OWN EXPERIENCE; we are told what is no more poſſible than that we ſhould ſpeak of Chriſt's miraculous cures from our OWN EXPERIENCE; or that we ſhould have the evidence of SENSE for his va-

* Scripture Characters, ſmall edit. vol. IV. p. 71; or large edit. p. 84.

† Ib. p. 147, or 176. ‡ Ib. 397, or 480.

rious

rious miracles. With the like confuſion of ideas we are aſked *, whether, by our *own* experience of his ability to ſave, we can ſtand forth as *witneſſes* of his reſurrection? We may, indeed, BELIEVE his ability to ſave with all poſſible firmneſs; but, until we are *actually* ſaved, we cannot in any ſenſe *experience* this ſalvation: and we may *believe* with perfect confidence his reſurrection, upon the evidence there is for it; but, whatever our confidence may be, this confidence can never make us to *become* witneſſes of that great event. So again we hear † of thoſe who *have* EXPERIENCED deliverance by the power of Jeſus. Now, whether this means deliverance from the power or the puniſhment of ſin, the application of experience to either of theſe bleſſings is ſurely very improper, if not utterly unintelligible; becauſe we are not yet in poſſeſſion of either. Did men indeed NOW *experience* either of theſe bleſſings, there would be an end of Chriſtian FAITH; they would then walk not by *faith* but by *feeling:* for, what a man poſſeſſes, *i. e.* experiences by the uſe of his *ſenſes*, why doth he yet hope for? and what would then become of that earneſt expectation of the creature, waiting for the manifeſtation of the *ſons* of God? a manifeſtation diſcovering itſelf by their being (wholly) delivered from the bondage of corruption;—and are they now *ſo* delivered? Hope that is *ſeen*, hope that is

* Scripture Characters, p. 147, or 176.

† Ibid. vol. III. p. 412, or 482.

the

the object of *ſenſe* (and ſuch is whatever we experience), ſaith the apoſtle, is NOT hope: but, if we hope for that we ſee *not*, *then* do we with patience *wait* for it.

But this author, in common with the whole tribe of thoſe who call themſelves ſerious divines and goſpel-miniſters (though ſuch we are told, vol. IV. p. 10, or 13, ſhould not court appellations of honour), and whom the world not unfrequently calls Methodiſts *, plainly miſtakes the *confidence* of *expectation* for the *certainty* of *experience*, the *poſitiveneſs* of *opinion* for the *convictions* of reaſon. Not ſo the apoſtles: they exhort the followers of Jeſus to aſcertain the certainty of their convictions and the ground of their expectations, NOT by any INWARD FEELINGS and EXPERIENCES, but by the weight of *rational* evidence there is for them: and it was from *external* proof (whatever may be ſaid to the contrary †) that they expected the *efficacious* principle of *faith*. Paul tells

* I would not be thought to countenance an unmeaning, much leſs an injurious, appellation; but, perhaps, this appellation may loſe that indiſtinctneſs which has been objected to it, if it ſhould be applied only to *thoſe*, who either deny the exiſtence of the LAW of NATURE, or who lay *claim* to knowledge received *immediately* from God, or acquired by the uſe of a *ſupernatural* perceptive power, given of God expreſsly for this purpoſe, to ſome *particular* perſons; and ſuch knowledge which *is not*, and (as is affirmed by thoſe who lay this claim) *cannot* be, acquired by the uſe of *any* NATURAL *faculty*, or by *reaſoning*, or by *inſtruction*. See Milner againſt Gibbon, p. 157.

† Scripture Characters, vol. III. p. 467, or 547.

us,

us, the goſpel was made *known* to all nations for the *obedience* of faith, ſurely then the apoſtles expected the *efficacious* principle from this their publication; for, if they did not, what did they expect? But, becauſe we are informed by revelation, that thoſe who will not attend to this external publication and *ordinary* proof of religion, would not be convinced by a *miracle* (Luke xvi. 31), it is therefore ſagaciouſly argued, "that no external evidence will, OF ITSELF, produce any *proper* religious convictions *." It was *not* from their *own ſenſe* of the ſufficiency of Chriſt's ranſom † that the apoſtles ſtood forth as witneſſes of Chriſt's reſurrection; (for, at that time, they knew very little about either his ranſom, or the ſufficiency of it, Acts i. 22); but, becauſe they enjoyed familiar converſe, and did eat and drink with him after he roſe from the dead, if we are to believe their own account of the matter. To talk of OUR having *experimental* knowledge in *ſuch* circumſtances, is to talk without the leaſt meaning. It is juſt as poſſible to ſpeak of the diſpoſitions, or actions, the valour, and conduct, of Cæſar, or Alexander; of the medical ſkill of Hippocrates; or the patience of Socrates; from *our* OWN experience.

We may indeed *believe* what is recorded of the actions or diſpoſitions of men in ſacred or profane hiſtory; and we may give full credit to thoſe aſſertions of ſcripture, which affirm Chriſt's power

* Scripture Characters, vol IV. p. 286, or 345.

† Ib. p. 146, 147, or 176, 177.

and

and love, his faithfulneſs and mercy, his willingneſs and ability to ſave. But this is FAITH, *not* EXPERIENCE; and has no more to do with the *teſtimony* of SENSE, that is, with *our experience*, than it has with thoſe other very different kinds of proof, analogy, or demonſtration.

The doctrines of Chriſtianity admit of no other evidence for their truth than that they are to be found in ſcripture. The knowledge of theſe doctrines was received by the apoſtles IMMEDIATELY from God. They had the evidence of ſenſe for their *own* conviction of the reality of this revelation; and they were furniſhed with the power of working miracles for the *like* conviction of others. When then it is inquired *, "whether we are SENSIBLE of any *communion between Jeſus* and our *own* ſouls?" it ſhould firſt have been ſhewn, (whatever we may be to underſtand by ſuch communion), that the *exiſtence* of it is a doctrine of Scripture; for, till that point is aſcertained, it is of no uſe to inquire into the meaning of it. And when it is proved by *plain* and LITERAL expreſſions (in oppoſition to ſuch as have only a metaphorical ſignification) of the inſpired writers to be a doctrine of Scripture, then an inquiry ſhould be made into the meaning of the doctrine. For, no advantage can poſſibly ariſe from the uſe of words without meaning, from *whatever* authority they may be derived. He that ſpeaketh in an UNKNOWN tongue (and ſuch is all

* Scripture Characters, vol. III. p. 305, or 358.

language,

language, if we have no ideas to the words) ſpeaketh not unto men;—for, NO man UNDERSTANDETH him, 1 Cor. xiv. 2.

Now, in the firſt place, I do not find any mention of this *communion* with *Jeſus* in Scripture. The word communion is only uſed in three places. The original (Greek) word κοινωνία, from κοινὸς common, uſually ſignifies participation, *i. e.* partaking with others: hence it means alſo fellowſhip, *i. e.* ſociety of that particular kind, where all are *equals*; viz. joint and equal partakers of ſomewhat in common: hence it is farther transferred from perſons to things; and means that ſimilarity or agreement, which inanimate matters of different kinds may have with each other. Thus, 1 Cor. x. 16, the euchariſt is called the communion of the blood, and the communion of the body of Chriſt, viz. the joint partaking of this ordinance: and, 2 Cor. vi. 14, it is inquired what communion hath light with darkneſs? What have light and darkneſs in common with each other? Is there any circumſtance in which they agree? And again, 2 Cor. xiii. 14, the apoſtle prays, that the communion of the Holy Ghoſt (a participation, in *conſequence* of *a common effuſion*, perhaps of His extraordinary gifts, which was not unuſual at that time) might attend the Corinthian converts; for it does not appear to which *kind* of His gifts the words refer.

We may obſerve, that the word communion is uſed in all theſe places in a *literal* ſenſe. But what are we to underſtand by the communion of one intelligent

telligent being with another intelligent being? Is it poſſible to underſtand this communion in a *literal* ſenſe? or can we experience a metaphor? And by *which* of our *ſenſes* is this *experience* to be conveyed to us? It will be ſaid, perhaps, that the ſame thing is intended with what the apoſtle intends 2 Cor. xiii. 5, where he aſks, "know ye not that Jeſus Chriſt is IN you." Theſe words imply, we are told*, more than a mere imitation or reſemblance of (why not conformity to?) His character. We may, it is ſaid, *fairly* infer from them—what?—what is utterly unintelligible: for, if the words have no ideas annexed to them, what knowledge can they convey? We may infer that his people are joined to him by the agency of the Spirit, and favoured with His gracious reſidence in their hearts. Now, unleſs we are to underſtand this junction in the literal ſenſe of the words, of what uſe is it to ſay, that *more* is implied than *can* be conveyed by a metaphorical ſenſe? If we cannot ſpecify what this MORE is, it is impoſſible that we ſhould know that IT is implied. And can we underſtand how one intelligent being can be joined to another intelligent being? And are we to underſtand, is it poſſible to underſtand, this reſidence in the heart literally? If no more is meant than what St. Paul means when he prays that Chriſt may DWELL in the HEARTS of the Epheſians by FAITH; and that the WORD of Chriſt may DWELL in the Coloſſians; and what he

* Scripture Characters, vol. IV. p. 469, or 567.

alſo

alſo means when he recollects the *faith* of Timothy, which DWELT firſt in his grandmother Lois, then in his mother Eunice, and laſtly in Timothy himſelf; and what our Lord himſelf means, John xv. 7, "if my words ABIDE IN you;" the *nature* and *extent* of the metaphor cannot be miſtaken. But then what becomes of the notion of a SPIRITUAL UNION with Chriſt; which, we are told *, the *proud* advocates for what is improperly termed a rational ſyſtem of theology ſneer at? A SPIRITUAL *union* the object of SENSE! Yet, ſurely, the Scriptures ſay nothing of any union, either ſpiritual or ſenſible, with Chriſt: the word union is not to be found in the New Teſtament. It is ſaid †, that every believer, by virtue of an union with Chriſt, *is* brought into a ſtate of glorious exiſtence, which death cannot deſtroy nor impair. Scripture ſays nothing at all of any *ſuch* union, or of any *ſuch* effect of it. We are told indeed repeatedly, that Chriſt will raiſe up every believer at the laſt day, and that he will then change our vile body, that it may be like his glorious body, according to the working of his irreſiſtible power; but I do not find one word about *this union*. Perhaps this union with Chriſt, of which believers are to be *ſenſible*, that is, which they are to *experience*, or for which they are to have the evidence of *ſenſe*, may reſemble that union of which Mr. Newton ſpeaks ‡; it is, he ſays, a REAL

* Scripture Characters, vol. IV. p. 470, or 567.

† Ib. vol. III. p. 465, or 545.

‡ See Sermons called Meſſiah, vol. I. p. 154, 367, 570.

union; yet it cannot be *repreſented* by *any words*: it muſt be FELT: it is a *myſtery*: it is a *ſecret*: yet we muſt believe IT.—Believe what?—what we cannot know any thing about! for, how we can know any thing about that which cannot be explained, I am at a loſs to find out. Simple ideas, it is true, are inexplicable by words, but we can acquire them by being referred to the proper means. When we *perceive* the relations between ideas, we poſſeſs *actual* knowledge: when we do *not* perceive the relations between the ideas, but are *perſuaded*, upon the *information* of others that ſuch relations do intercede between the ideas, ſuch perſuaſion is *not* knowledge;—it is FAITH. But when words are unintelligible they convey no ideas. This is the difference between known and unknown languages: the ideas connected with the words, or with the ſounds expreſſing ſuch words, are known in one caſe, in the other not. Now, except ye utter by the tongue words *poſſible* to be underſtood, how ſhall it be known *what* is ſpoken? If I know *not* the *meaning* of the voice, he that ſpeaketh ſhall be a *barbarian* unto me. But we are to FEEL this unintelligible matter. Men can aſcertain their ideas and communicate their *knowledge* to one another with much preciſion, if they take care; but *no* care will enable them to communicate their feelings to one another, unleſs they be ſuch feelings as run through the *whole* ſpecies. The different affections are ſo many ſtates of mind which run through all mankind in ſimilar ſituations; and theſe different feelings

ings can be preciſely aſcertained, becauſe the correſponding ſituations can be exactly pointed out in which theſe various feelings are excited in every individual of the whole ſpecies. Thus we become acquainted with the ſenſations, *i. e.* the ſimple ideas of love, hatred, joy, grief, &c. But we cannot be made acquainted, in the ſame preciſe way, with the *particular* feelings of *individuals*, becauſe we cannot tell when we are preciſely in the ſame ſituation; which is the only way by which we can be ſure that the ſimple ideas we receive are ſimilar to thoſe of others.

But let us ſee what muſt follow from this way of ſetting up *feeling* in the place of knowledge, in order to convince mankind of the *truth*; which in theſe days is dignified with the name of EXPERIMENTAL RELIGION.

"It is to no purpoſe," ſays a good Papiſt, "that you urge the teſtimony of your eyes againſt the doctrine of tranſubſtantiation, becauſe ſight is not applicable to this miracle: for, we do not ſay the *accidents* of the bread and wine are altered; it is the ſubſtance only which is changed." "Why, yes," replies the Proteſtant, "you ſay that one *unknown ſubſtratum* is changed for another *unknown ſubſtratum*; and this propoſition we ſay is *utterly* unintelligible." "To be ſure it is," ſays the Papiſt; "this change is ſomething that *cannot* be *explained*: it is a REAL change, yet it *cannot* be repreſented by *any* words: it muſt be FELT: it is a *myſtery*: it is a *ſecret*: yet we are to BELIEVE it." Now, will

any of the patrons of this *new* way of *arguing* from feelings be kind enough to ſhew *why* it is not equally *applicable*, and equally *concluſive*, in both caſes?

Aware of the utter impoſſibility of comprehending the mode of the divine exiſtence, not leſs averſe to giving up the inveterate prejudice of his party, and equally unable to diſcern that words without ideas cannot promote knowlege, Mr. Newton has adopted this ſyſtem of *feeling*: a ſyſtem of which ALL men may avail themſelves in behalf of *any* thing or *nothing*; and which NO man can refute. No leſs ſenſible of all theſe difficulties, and as unwilling to depart from a favourite *dogma*, Mr. Robinſon ſays little of this matter of feeling;—as little, indeed, as he can, without giving up what perſons of equal piety but leſs underſtanding are ſo zealouſly attached to; and with his uſual warineſs ſays*, Chriſt prayed that all his people may be joined together as one body, by a *divine* and *myſterious* UNION, even reſembling that which ſubſiſts between the Perſons of the Godhead. Now, in the firſt place, the Scripture ſays nothing of an *union*, much leſs of a *myſterious union*, ſubſiſting between the Perſons of the Godhead: and how can it, when it ſays nothing about the PERSONS of the Godhead. "Let us not, therefore," to borrow our author's own words†, "blindly and implicitly ſubmit to the opinions and *dictates* of men, though they may bear a moſt reſpectable character, and be *generally* and

* Scripture Characters, vol. IV. p. 84, or 100.

† Ib. vol. III. p. 311, or 364.

deſervedly

deſervedly eminent for zeal and piety. Let us not form our judgement from human deciſions, but from the law and the teſtimony; ſince, WHOEVER may be our teachers, *we* muſt anſwer for *ourſelves* before the bar of God.

To be ſure, we ſhould not read the Scriptures to gratify a vain and conceited curioſity; but, can we reap ſome ſpiritual advantage from *every* paſſage we read unleſs we underſtand it? And, if we wiſh to underſtand *every* paſſage we read, ſhall we not be under the neceſſity of *unravelling* difficulties? Who have been more diſcontented at the little that is revealed to us, and the imperfect manner in which that little is revealed, than thoſe eminently pious men who have taken ſo much pains, to ſo little purpoſe, in endeavouring to explain the doctrine of Chriſt's ſatisfaction *? Nor ſhould we attempt to explore † what was *deſigned* to be kept ſecret. To be ſure we ſhould not, becauſe it muſt be fooliſh to aim at counteracting the deſigns of God: but, how are we to know what he intends ſhould be kept ſecret, unleſs he is pleaſed to declare it, as in the caſe of the day of judgement, Mark xiii. 32? Whenever God ſpeaks of myſteries in Scripture, he does not ſpeak of them as *unintelligible*, but as *undiſcoverable*, by men. Our inability to underſtand things is no mark of God's intention; though we are told ‡, that many things may be *hidden* from

* See Theological Eſſays, by W. Ludlam, Eſſay IV.

† Scripture Characters, vol. I. p. 121, or 149.

‡ Ib. p. 341, or 415.

us, for *this very* reaſon, becauſe our faculties cannot comprehend them. What, *deſignedly* hidden? Many things may be ſecret, may be unknown to us; but ſurely there can be little reaſon for hiding from us what we *cannot* underſtand although it were not hidden. With the like attention to meaning, we are told of doctrines * that are *harſh* AND *unintelligible* †: but the Scripture ſcarcely ever ſpeaks of matters as being unintelligible. When Paul heard ſuch ſayings as he could not explain to men, whatever information he received himſelf he never aimed at tranſmitting it ‡: yet, if he had not received ſome extraordinary knowledge, whether conſiſting of new ideas or of new relations between old ones, why conſider his aſſumption into the third heaven as a matter ſo honourable to him? What then is gotten by endeavouring to teach what cannot be underſtood, *i. e.* what cannot be taught? If this union be unintelligible, what benefit can come from talking about it? Certainly not more advantage than knowledge? And what is loſt by ſaying nothing about what the Scriptures ſay nothing? Chriſt is ſtill God, whatever becomes of this *myſterious* this *unintelligible* union. He remains juſt as much the creator, the preſerver, the governor, the builder, of all things. Nor does the Scripture found his claim to any of the powers he poſſeſſes

* Scripture Characters, vol. III. p. 305, or 358.

† Unleſs it be an error of the preſs.

‡ Becauſe it could nor be repreſented by any words Paul did not tell the Corinthians they muſt FEEL *it*.

upon

upon this *myſterious union*. His Sonſhip remains the ſame; this is NO myſtery; for he was *declared* to be the Son of God with power by his reſurrection from the dead, however unintelligible or unrevealed the nature of this *relation* may be. His diſtinction from the Father ſtill remains. As the Father hath life in Himſelf, originally and unreceived, ſo hath He *given* to the Son to have life in himſelf—whatever is implied in that expreſſion. And, what is worthy of notice, Chriſt's power of judging intelligent beings is given, not on account of any myſterious union with, or relation to, the Father, but becauſe he is the ſon of man; and it is *ſolely* from the execution of this office, and not on any other account whatever, that all men are to honour the Son even as they honour the Father. But, when Chriſt ſays "I and my Father are ONE," it is in manifeſt alluſion to his exerciſe of the FIRST divine attribute, POWER (an attribute without which every other attribute would be inſignificant); and our Lord affirms that believers are as ſecure in his hands and under his protection, as in the hands and under the protection of the Father, John x. 28, 29, 30. Now, though we cannot poſſibly have any idea of this myſterious union, nor is it poſſible that what is perfectly unintelligible ſhould at all concern our conduct, yet we can perfectly and clearly underſtand what is meant by exerciſing the *ſame* power; and we may be *mainly* concerned in that relation which involves this aſtoniſhing, this important, privilege. In like manner, we may perfectly under-

ſtand what it is to have the ſame diſpoſitions, deſires, inclinations, deſigns; and, when our Lord prays "that all his people may be ONE with him as he is one with the Father," we clearly underſtand what is meant by his deſiring that they may entertain the ſame diſpoſitions towards him, the ſame love and affection, the ſame regard for what God approves, the ſame ardent zeal for his honour and ſervice, the ſame earneſt deſire to obey his commands;—what the apoſtle means by their having the ſame mind, by Chriſt being formed in them, and by Chriſt dwelling in their hearts;—that, as his Father had loved him, and he had loved them, they alſo might poſſeſs the ſame unlimited and unceaſing affection to God, their kind and forgiving Father, to him their gracious their compaſſionate Redeemer. Words are wholly wanting to expreſs, the utmoſt power of imagination ſinks under any endeavour to conceive, the height and depth, the breadth and length immeaſurable, of the Redeemer's love; to uſe the expreſſion of St. Paul; and which we may well believe the inſpired writer declared not in the words which man's wiſdom teacheth, but which the Holy Ghoſt teacheth. The fulleſt reſemblance is ſameneſs; the neareſt ſameneſs, identity; and what can repreſent a more perfect idea of identity than being ONE? If we muſt needs adopt *terms* not to be found in Scripture, can the advocates for what is proudly termed a rational theology ſneer at ſuch an union? or can they object to calling this connexion between the *ſpiritual* part

of

of our nature and him that made it a *ſpiritual union?* Far from being a myſterious or an unintelligible union (which may be the occaſion of their perhaps not unjuſtifiable contempt), what is meant by it is perfectly clear,—level to the meaneſt capacity. The wayfayring men, though fools, may not only underſtand, they may FEEL, what *that* is which can alone make us, in the ſtrong and expreſſive language of inſpiration, PARTAKERS of the *divine nature.*

We are further told*, "This divine influence;"—now this ſpiritual union with Chriſt is *changed* into *divine influence.* Has then divine influence any neceſſary connexion with this ſpiritual union, or this ſpiritual union with divine influence?—This divine influence, we are told, is the more to be *inſiſted* on, becauſe it is denied by many who boaſt of the ſufficiency of their own unaſſiſted ſtrength. If any boaſt of it, it is, I ſuppoſe, becauſe they *experience* it; and is not experience as good an argument in one caſe as the other? And how are we to know whether we are aſſiſted or not? But what ſhall we get by inſiſting upon what we are unable or unwilling clearly to explain? And what knowlege ſhall we get by pretending to make diſcoveries in the *dark?* Will the word of God have leſs efficacy if we endeavour to underſtand it? And ſhall we be farther from ſalvation if we ſucceed? Will revelation be the worſe, if *any part* of it ſhould accord with human reaſon? Redemption is a ſubject in

* Scripture Characters, vol. IV. p. 470, or 569.

which

which mankind are intereſted far beyond what they can poſſibly be in any other. Its importance is therefore a reaſon for ſtudying it * with the utmoſt attention, as its difficulty is no leſs a reaſon for the higheſt caution. It is a diſpenſation ſo wonderful, that beings ſuperior to men, and who have no concern in it, are, nevertheleſs, deſirous to look into it, 1 Pet. i. 12. The motives to this wonderful diſpenſation, (and yet I will not take upon me to affirm, as is affirmed, Vol. IV. p. 456 or 551, that there was *nothing more* in the caſe of *fallen* men than *devils*, which could encourage an expectation of forgiveneſs), and the mode of carrying it on, muſt be ſought in the divine *nature* and *character*. By the nature of God I underſtand his powers and mode of exiſtence. By his character I underſtand his diſpoſitions. His powers I collect from his works. His mode of exiſtence can be learned only from what he may be pleaſed to reveal of it. His diſpoſitions I become acquainted with by conſidering his works and the courſe of his providence; and from attending to what he has been pleaſed to reveal of his will and his intentions reſpecting *his* intelligent creatures. God's benevolence diſplayed in creation, and the gracious deſign of redemption, would have ſufficiently informed us, although we had not been *expreſsly* told, that GOD IS LOVE. But the mode of accompliſhing this work of love muſt ſpring from his *wiſdom*. And he has not thought fit to *acquaint*

* Scripture Characters, large edit. vol. IV. p. 403.

us

us with the *reaſons* which induced him to *adopt* the mode which he has *actually* employed, nor the circumſtances upon which its *efficacy* depends. On both theſe heads then, we ARE, and MUST be, in UTTER ignorance; and all endeavours at explaining either of theſe matters (a practice not unuſual with ſuch as are called *goſpel-miniſters* *) are not leſs abſurd than the practice of ſuch as are called *rational divines* of examining the fitneſs and propriety of God's proceedings, revealed in Scripture, by a like improper application of human reaſon. It has been well obſerved with what reluctance men reſt (and, it might have been added, believers no leſs than infidels) upon the word ſpoken; with what fooliſh and unwarrantable curioſity both aim at explaining thoſe unrevealed parts of God's diſpenſations. It is notorious, that men of unqueſtionable piety, through unjuſtifiable deſires of being wiſe above what is written, or of repelling (though injudiciouſly) the arguments of their opponents, have indulged many vain conceits of imagination; and, while they have followed groundleſs fancies, have expoſed to contempt and ridicule, through their own reveries, the truths they were ſo improperly eager to eſtabliſh or defend; they were not aware, that it is exactly the *ſame* folly, which, under the name of reaſon in one party, and with no other nor any better ſupport in another, attempts to *op-*

* See the Writings of almoſt all the Calviniſtical divines, and the Eſſays of W. Ludlam above quoted.

poſe

poſe or *add weight* to the *authority* of revelation, by fooliſh objections, or more fooliſh explanations; while *genuine* reaſon (however reviled), *i. e.* reaſon unadulterated with the love of vain philoſophy, no leſs than *genuine* faith, *i. e.* faith unadulterated with the love of *ſyſtem*, conſtantly acquieſces in the divine declarations, and equally cuts off all objections, and all explanations, with THE LORD HATH SAID IT *.

However neceſſary zeal may be for the furtherance of the goſpel, in theſe days of trouble, and rebuke, and blaſphemy; however commendable the piety of thoſe may be who dare to ſtand forth as inſtructors of the world in this ſinful and adulterous generation; yet we have the authority of an apoſtle to aſſure us, that there may be a zeal *even* for God, which is not according to knowledge; and we know that piety is neither a *proof* of truth, nor a *teſt* of abilities, although ſome may affect to inſinuate or aſſert it to be ſo. For, however laudable the deſire of thoſe who covet earneſtly the beſt gifts, and endeavour to excel in edifying the church, yet it has not always happened, that ſuch have been children in malice, any more than they have been men in underſtanding. They have treated thoſe who only deſired to know their meaning with all the arrogant aſſurance of papal infallibility, and all the crocodile compaſſion of inquiſitorial bigotry. When the ma-

* Scripture Characters, vol. I. p. 3, 55, 126, 237, 341, 429, or 4, 67, 155, 291, 415, 520; vol. IV. p. 191, or 230.

niſeſt

nifeſt miſtakes of men of unqueſtionable piety (like that of Joſeph Milner in his account of Chriſtian juſtification) have been noticed, then theſe perſons have been contented, with all the *inſolence* of humility, to be reckoned FOOLS for CHRIST'S SAKE. But are theſe the tempers, or this the conduct, of a miniſter of the Goſpel? What knowledge can ſpring, or what benefit be derived, from unintelligible inſtruction and words without meaning? Is this to feed (if we muſt uſe metaphors) the flock of Chriſt with food *convenient* for them; and are the barren waſtes of ſchool-divinity to be reckoned "the green paſtures of Chriſt *?" But examining into the meaning of what is taught, it is inſinuated, will make our ſouls *lean* and *dry*;—are marrow and fatneſs then only to be found in empty ſounds? and muſt we endeavour to fill ourſelves with the huſks of knowledge for fear we ſhould become contentious? But what is the chaff to the wheat? The queſtion is not ſo much about what perſons are poſſeſſed of right doctrines, as what is the meaning of thoſe opinions which the different ſects of Chriſtianity ſo tenaciouſly hold, ſo earneſtly defend, and ſo eagerly endeavour to eſtabliſh. Had all attended to clear knowledge, they would have been much nearer to the truth and to each other: but ſo it has happened that the only faculty by which men can become poſſeſſed of the truth, has been treated as if it would unavoidably prevent

* Scripture Characters, vol. III. p. 278, or 326.

their

their poſſeſſion of it; and, becauſe it has too often been improperly applied, it is continually either openly ſaid or covertly hinted, that it is not only *uſeleſs* but *miſchievous*. But, ſurely, we may hope not only better things from this gift of God (a gift without which all his other gifts would be of no value), but alſo things that accompany ſalvation.

But, though *this reaſon* may not enable us to underſtand ſuch parts of the Chriſtian diſpenſation as reſpect the nature or the grounds of the councils of God, *it* may be better able to comprehend ſuch as reſpect the nature or the faculties of man: theſe we are or may be better acquainted with. The knowledge we have of them is not conveyed to us through the imperfect medium of language. Here we have a ſurer inſtructor; that great teacher from whom we obtain much the greateſt part of the knowledge we are poſſeſſed of, EXPERIENCE; to whom, indeed, all are ſo fond of appealing. Yet there is no ſubject on which extreme caution is more neceſſary; for, unleſs we carefully attend to the nature and the objects of experience, we ſhall be in perpetual danger of miſapplying it, and, from ſuch miſapplication, of running into endleſs miſtakes.

It ſhould be conſtantly and carefully kept in mind, that it is one thing to *experience* our *own belief* of a paſt or *expectation* of a future event, and quite a different thing to experience the event itſelf. Belief has no neceſſary connexion with reality; and the tempers of the mind are no more a proof of the truth

truth of what is believed, than panic terrors are a proof of the certainty of danger. A good Papiſt may experience his own belief of tranſubſtantiation; a good Proteſtant may experience his own belief of the *Calviniſtic* explanations of the doctrines of Chriſtianity. Both may be perfectly ſatisfied with their own belief while they live, and may enjoy much compoſure and comfort, or (if you like it better) feel much exultation and triumph, when they come to die; but neither the belief ſo entertained, nor the experience received of the operation and influence of this belief, is any more a proof of the truth of the matters ſo believed in one caſe than in the other. It is indeed a proof of the *reality* of his *belief* who entertains it, and of the ſincerity of his aſſertions, *i. e.* that his thoughts correſpond with his words; but it neither is nor can be a proof of the truth of their reſpective opinions: and, as ſincerity has no neceſſary connexion with truth, this *ſort* of *experience* (if it be worth any thing) may be found not only amongſt every diviſion of Chriſtians, but amongſt Jews, Turks, and Pagans into the bargain. When, therefore, we are told * that many Chriſtians, by their heavenly tempers, and lively joys at the hour of their departure, put it beyond a doubt that their ſyſtem is not a cunningly-deviſed fable, the argument has no foundation. Theſe tempers and theſe joys are a proof of their own confidence in what they believe, but they neither are

* Scripture Characters, vol. IV. p. 292, or 352.

nor can be a proof of the truth or the excellence of their religion, as we are told *. The Muſſulman who exults in his belief of the Mahometan paradiſe, and the Papiſt who ſhews by his lively joys his belief in the maſſes which are to deliver his ſoul from purgatory, give juſt as *good* a proof of the *truth* and *excellence* of their reſpective religions. Exactly of the ſame ſort is that notion, that the numbers who hold abſtract, or are influenced by practical, opinions, are a proof of the truth of thoſe opinions; and this is ſometimes called "God's giving his teſtimony †." But, ſurely, that can never be conſidered as the teſtimony of God which may be produced, with equal force, in behalf of falſehood as well as truth, and which has been continually urged in behalf of Popery and Mahometaniſm. Piety and truth have no *neceſſary* connexion.—But the piety of certain perſons is right becauſe their faith is true; and their faith is true becauſe their piety is right. No wonder Mr. Joſeph Milner and his friends ſhould reject REASON and reprobate LOCKE.

But, though it is both nonſenſe to ſay, and folly to imagine, we have or can have the evidence of experience for the *general* truths or the *paſt facts* of Chriſtianity, or the *future effects* of theſe facts; becauſe it is impoſſible for us to have the *teſtimony* of *ſenſe* (for that is the only meaning of experience) for the diſpoſitions, the actions, the powers, of perſons who lived many centuries before us; yet

* Scripture Characters, vol I. p. 228, 427, or 281, 517.

† Ib. p. 247, or 298.

we

we can tell from *experience* what deſire we have to receive information; what attention we have paid to, what conſideration we have beſtowed upon, the hiſtorical relations we have received of our Lord and his apoſtles. We can know from our own experience what degree of credit we have given to the evidences of Chriſtianity; what degree of regard we do pay to the Scriptures; what quantity of knowledge we receive from them; what effect this knowledge has upon our affections; what influence it has upon our conduct *.—This is the *proper* and the only province of experience; this is the true and only uſe we can make of it in religion, whatever elſe may be pretended. Thus, BELIEVING the paſt facts related, and the future effects of them predicted, in the goſpel, we may rejoice, though now we *ſee* them not, with joy unſpeakable and full of glory; in full aſſurance of receiving, at laſt, the end, NOT of our preſent *experience*, but of our preſent FAITH, the ſalvation of our ſouls.

* Scripture Characters, vol. II. p. 390, or 463.

ESSAY IV.

UPON

ENTHUSIASM AND FANATICISM.

MEN can receive knowledge only in *two* ways,

1. By the *uſe* of thoſe faculties their Creator has given them; or,
2. By *ſuch* communication from himſelf as he may think proper.

The knowledge men receive by the uſe of their various faculties is very imperfect; it is liable to be mixed with error, owing to the imperfection of theſe faculties, which are much limited in *power* and *extent*. The knowledge received from God, as far as it reaches, is liable to no mixture of error; but then men muſt be *made ſure* that their knowledge is received from God before they can *claim infallibility*; and they muſt be enabled to *work miracles* before they can *demand* this *claim* to be *admitted* by *other* men. We can conceive no other mark of a

meſſage from God, than a power in him who is entruſted with it of altering the eſtabliſhed courſe of God's appointments *; and, unleſs both the meſſenger himſelf know that he is entruſted with a divine meſſage, and thoſe to whom he is ſent are *equally* ſenſible of the *ſame* truth, every conceivable end of revelation is loſt; for, the only uſe of revelation which we can imagine is to introduce the immediate and indiſputable *authority* of God into human affairs.

By Enthuſiaſm and Fanaticiſm, then, I underſtand an *unſupported* claim to IMMEDIATE and SENSIBLE intercourſe with God. The enthuſiaſt ſuppoſes himſelf in poſſeſſion of *knowledge*, the fanatic of *directions*, immediately (and miraculouſly) communicated to him from God himſelf; but neither of them produce any credentials to eſtabliſh this claim.

Thoſe perſons, then, who object to *fervour* in religion, as being enthuſiaſtical or fanatical †, know not the meaning of the words. The objection is ridiculous; the complaint impoſſible. Enthuſiaſm and fanaticiſm have no more to do with the diſpoſitions or affections of the human mind, than they have to do with the human will or the human memory. Both belong to the imagination; both conſiſt in a conceit of and claim to apoſtolical or prophetical *powers*, unattended with the poſſeſſion of

* Warburton's Sermons, vol. I. p. 112, &c. Serm. v.

† Scripture Characters, vol. I. p. 38, or 48; vol. II. p. 85, or 104; vol. III. p. 189, or 224; vol. IV. p. 357, 391, or 431, 471.

apoſtolical

apoſtolical or prophetical *credentials*; and the admiſſion of *ſuch* a claim, without its proper ſupport, would completely overturn the proof of ALL religion, whether *natural* or *revealed*.

The exertion of the affections is a *neceſſary*, and the exerciſe of them a part of RATIONAL religion no leſs delightful * than important. Religion is *founded* in the *relations* interceding between intelligent beings; and theſe relations can only ſpring from conduct, *i. e.* a courſe of action. God IS and CAN ONLY BE GOD by OFFICE, whatever may be ſaid †: it is not becauſe power belongeth unto God ‡ (how much ſoever ſome may talk of his ſovereignty), but becauſe the earth is full of his goodneſs, that men are under a MORAL *obligation* to worſhip him. Had men experienced only the power and the wiſdom of God, it might have been *prudent*, it might have been their *intereſt*, but (if we have any ideas to our words) it never could have been MORALLY RIGHT, it never could have been their DUTY, to have paid him any religious regard. As for His *ſelf-exiſtence*, and *neceſſary exiſtence*, and *independence*, the manufacture and moonſhine of the *ſchools*, they are mere words; the ideas annexed to them are negative ideas, *i. e.* nothing; they can only ſerve to ſhew what God is not; but this does not promote *actual* knowledge, and is never done in reſpect to any thing unleſs when it is impoſſible to

* Pſalm cxlvii. 1.

† Scripture Characters, vol. III. p. 25, or 29.

‡ Ogden, vol. II. p. 33.

ſhew WHAT it IS; and theſe words which man's wiſdom teacheth (to ſpeak with the apoſtle) are not to be found in Scripture.

We are told, indeed, that in religion * (meaning, I ſuppoſe, the goſpel diſpenſation) "ALL IS OF GRACE." But certainly this CAPITAL maxim is *equally* true in every part of the divine adminiſtration. Nothing ſurely can be of DEBT; for, as is juſtly obſerved †, who has any claim upon God? Revelation confirms in this point the voice of reaſon. God appeals continually to the benefits he had conferred upon the Jewiſh nation, to ſhew both their obligations and their ingratitude to him. Nor is the goſpel ſilent in reſpect of the reſt of mankind; ſee Acts xiv. and xvii.

With the ſame confuſion of ideas, under a like partial and indiſtinct view of the nature of the divine adminiſtration, and a ſimilar inattention to the uſual and general mode of God's proceedings with mankind, we are told ‡ that the grace of God *operates* in a SOVEREIGN manner. I do not find that the Scriptures ever ſpeak of the grace of God as *operating*, much leſs of this SOVEREIGN mode of its operation. When God's favour reſpects the future happineſs of mankind (for I enter not into the peculiar circumſtances of this ſort of favour) it is called GRACE; when the preſent, it is more uſually ſtyled goodneſs. The *knowledge* of either may affect the human mind, may move the affections, and, in

* Scripture Characters, vol. I. p. 38, or 49.

† Ib. vol. IV. p. 121, or 145. ‡ Ib. vol III. p. 72, or 87.

conſequence,

conſequence, influence the conduct of mankind. So St. Paul tells thoſe who lived in wickedneſs, that they knew not (what they ought to know) that the goodneſs of God (the attention to and conſideration of his long ſuffering their blameable conduct, and his forbearance to puniſh it) leadeth (was the natural, the appointed way of leading them) to repentance, and, of courſe, to amendment. But it is ſurely very ſtrange, if not utterly unintelligible, to attribute action or operation to the favour of God. This operation of grace is a *ſovereign operation*; it *operates* in a *ſovereign manner*. All this, to be ſure, is a highly figurative manner of ſpeaking, no where uſed by the inſpired writers. When we apply the word *ſovereign* to perſons or things, it means overcoming all oppoſition, irreſiſtible; ſo ſovereign power means a power ſuperior to, ſovereign authority an authority paramount to, all other; a ſovereign remedy, not only an efficacious one, but one that is always efficacious,—a certain remedy. But, without enquiring more particularly what we are to underſtand by this *ſovereign manner*, may I too be permitted to uſe words without any *diſtinct* meaning, and to aſk, does the grace of God operate in a MORE ſovereign manner than his goodneſs? Is it then that the bleſſings of divine grace are not vouchſafed to all mankind *indiſcriminately?* No more are thoſe of the divine goodneſs. Is it that the bleſſings of divine grace are not vouchſafed to ſuch as are favoured with them in *equal* meaſure? No more are thoſe of the divine goodneſs. Is it

that, when divine grace operates in this *ſovereign* manner, thoſe to whom it is vouchſafed cannot abuſe it? But neither is this true. The bleſſings of grace are no leſs liable to abuſe than thoſe of nature. If men can exceedingly injure themſelves by an improper uſe of God's bounty, they can wreſt the Scriptures of ſalvation, thoſe great vehicles of grace, to their own deſtruction. Does the ſituation in which men are placed, reſpecting the value and benefit of God's temporal favours, depend not only upon the exertion of thoſe talents which God has given them, but alſo upon the aſſiſtance they may receive from their fellow-creatures? Equally ſo does the ſituation of men reſpecting the favours of God, which they are to receive in another life, depend upon the very *ſame* circumſtances; and men are equally called upon by the voice of Nature and Revelation to exert themſelves to obtain both the one and the other in the reſpective ways which God has appointed *. If the value of one far exceeds that of the other, the mode in which each is to be attained is exactly ſimilar. Were it not ſo, to what purpoſe would be the apoſtolic direction, "grow in grace." The happineſs God is diſpoſed to beſtow upon his creatures, whether it reſpect the life which now is or that which is to come, is not for the idle, the careleſs, the negligent. Both are to be the encouragements to, and the rewards of, that conduct, from which happineſs, under the preſent adminiſtration of God, is made to ariſe.

* Luke xiii. 24.

Or,

Or, when this apparent inequality and ſeeming irregularity of the divine conduct—one or two in a family, or two or three in a town, being ſelected, as it were, heirs of ſalvation—when this conduct is called acting in a *ſovereign* manner, is it to inſinuate that all this is done *without any reaſon* at all, or without *any* that has a *reference* to the *characters* of the perſons called? What! ſhall He, in whom are found all the treaſures of wiſdom and knowledge ſo abundantly as to exceed all our conceptions, ſhall He neglect to uſe that wiſdom which appears in every other part of his conduct? Or ſhall He who, though glorious in holineſs, mighty in power, and excellent in wiſdom, is moved by the diſpoſitions and behaviour of his poor, weak, and ſinful, creatures in the adminiſtration of his government *, and who ſeeth things that are not as though they were, conduct himſelf by the weakeſt of all human foibles—caprice? He that made the eye, ſhall He not ſee? and He that formed the ear, ſhall He not hear? And He that hath given reaſon and moral judgement to his creatures, ſhall He not be directed by them himſelf †? And what are we to underſtand by the ſovereignty of God, but his right to govern his creatures ‡—what St. Paul calls his *Godhead?* And this, if we liſten to the dictates of thoſe faculties which he has given us, neither is nor can be

* Gen. xxii. 16; 1 Kings xxi. 29; 2 Kings xx. 56; xxii. 19, 20; 2 Chron. i. 11, 12; xxxiii. 12, 13; xxxiv. 27, 28; Jonah ii. 10; Acts 10, 4.

† Gen. xviii. 25. ‡ Rom. i. 20.

founded

founded in the poſſeſſion of uncontroulable power, but in the exertion of that power in creation *. And the MORAL *obligation* of his creatures, I do not ſay to ſubmit to him, for ſubmit to him they muſt, but to yield him a willing obedience, ariſes, and *can* only ariſe, from the benefits he has been graciouſly pleaſed to beſtow upon them. Why does he affirm that his own ways are equal, but to ſhew that he is not ſuch an one as his creatures, ſubject to caprice? Why aſſert the immutability, not of his *purpoſes* (though this is affirmed, vol. II. p. 33, or 42), for theſe he often changes, but of his PRINCIPLES, unleſs it be to ſhew that confidence, the moſt unlimited confidence, is due to him? The righteous Lord loveth righteouſneſs, and he loveth it with an everlaſting love †.

All this, and more of the *like* ſort, is a *precious emanation* ‡ of that wiſdom of ſchool-divinity which delighted in repreſenting the Creator and Redeemer of mankind as a cruel and capricious being, in the celebrated doctrines of ABSOLUTE REPROBATION and UNCONDITIONAL ELECTION; a repreſentation ſcarcely poſſible to be found among thoſe who collect the character of their Creator from his works and his mode of governing his creatures. It is from the nature of God's uſual conduct that we muſt judge of the nature of his conduct in extraordinary exigencies where revealed information is wanting;

* Iſaiah xlv. 8, 11, 12, 18; Jer. xxvii. 5.

† Pſalm xi. 7; xxxiii. 5; Jer. ix. 24.

‡ Scripture Characters, large edit. vol. III. p. 404.

and

and this will by no means warrant the groundleſs and extravagant fancies of pious, it may be, but certainly miſtaken, perſons. But not only the notions of ſuch perſons have been adopted upon the ſcore of their piety, a ſtrange attachment to their quaint phraſeology, and a ſervile imitation of their (often affected) uſe of ſcripture-metaphors, is every where viſible amongſt their admirers; metaphors, whoſe *original* uſe in the firſt promulgation of the goſpel might, like that of parables, have had its foundation in the circumſtances of thoſe who were to be taught. There is, however, now certainly no longer any *particular* call for figurative language, which is better calculated, in general, to miſlead than to inſtruct, for which the plaineſt and moſt literal expreſſions are evidently beſt adapted in theſe days.

By religion I underſtand both the *mode* which God has appointed for (acceptable) acceſs to himſelf, and that kind of *conduct* and ſtate of the *affections* which the knowledge of him and acceſs to him are intended to produce. The mode of acceſs to God may and has varied at different times, according to his different appointments. For, though it be the ſame God who worketh all in all, yet there are great differences in his adminiſtration, juſt as there are great diverſities in his operations. And they who imagine that God's religious government muſt needs be carried on after a *like* manner under *different* diſpenſations, argue juſt as abſurdly as thoſe who imagined that the political government of God

over

over his own peculiar people (a people choſen for particular reaſons, a government inſtituted for ſingular purpoſes,) was of neceſſity to be the model of ALL civil inſtitutions; and hence it has happened, that, while infidels reject faith, becauſe they have had *no* experience of facts ſimilar to thoſe related in Scripture, believers are no leſs eager to introduce, with equal abſurdity, *experience*, *i. e.* the teſtimony of ſenſe into the place of FAITH, becauſe *this* teſtimony has obtained in ſome of the divine diſpenſations.

But, if the general tenour of God's earlier intercourſe with mankind, and the SENSIBLE manifeſtations of his preſence recorded in the Old Teſtament, have been thought not only to countenance, but to confirm, expectations, not perhaps of the very ſame * but of a ſimilar ſort; this expectation has been farther thought to receive no little ſupport from the New. Our Lord's reply in anſwer to St. Peter's confeſſion of him †, "Bleſſed art thou, Simon Barjona; for fleſh and blood hath not revealed it unto thee, but my Father which is in heaven," has been eſteemed not only an inſtance of *immediate* revelation, but a ſufficient ground to expect the *like* in theſe days ‡; and that men may *ſtill* look for ſupernatural information; that is, ſuch information as they cannot acquire, by the uſe of their natural faculties,

* Scripture Characters, vol I. p. 185, or 228.

† Matt. xvi. 17.

‡ See Newton's Sermons at Olney, p. 50; and Scripture Characters, vol. III. p. 320, 321, or 375, 376.

from the Scriptures. We apprehend the purport of this addreſs has been entirely miſunderſtood; and that our Lord did, and could *only*, mean, that Peter was *led* to this confeſſion of him as the Meſſias by attending to that revelation which God had made in the Jewiſh Scriptures, by the mouths of all his holy prophets, ſince the world began. Juſt as Andrew ſaid *, "We have found THE CHRIST;" and Philip †, "We have found HIM, of whom Moſes in the law and (of whom) the prophets did write;" and juſt as Martha made a *like* confeſſion ‡, "I believe, that thou art THE CHRIST, the Son of God, which ſhould come into the world," *i. e.* the Meſſias. For this truth, *viz.* that Jeſus was THE CHRIST, was no more revealed by *fleſh* and *blood* to Andrew, or Philip, or Martha, than it was to Peter: and Peter was no more conſcious, that this truth was *miraculouſly* revealed to *him*, than Andrew, or Philip, or Martha, were conſcious that it was *miraculouſly* revealed to *them*. And, had this truth been miraculouſly revealed to St. Peter, we may reaſonably ſuppoſe, that he would have been as conſcious of *this* revelation, as he was of thoſe which were afterwards made to him; for, in every other inſtance of an *immediate* revelation from God, we find the perſons, to whom ſuch revelation has been made, equally conſcious of the truth revealed, and of the *manner* in which ſuch truth has been conveyed to them: and, were they

* John, i. 41.
† Ib. 43.
‡ John, xi. 27.

ignorant

ignorant of this circumſtance, the truth made known muſt entirely loſe its great ſupport, the *authority* of divine revelation, and muſt ſtand upon the footing of all other truth acquired in the *uſual* ways. But, if Peter, by ſearching thoſe Scriptures which, according to our Lord's own account, John v. 39, teſtify of him, and by attending to the information of that ſpirit of prophecy which we are aſſured, Rev. xix. 10, is the teſtimony of Jeſus, recognized Chriſt for the Meſſias from thoſe numerous and ſtriking marks to which our Lord ſo often appealed; are we to deem this knowledge of St. Peter a knowledge received by his "*natural abilities* and *human aid* *," by "any *peculiar diſcernment* of his OWN or information from others †?" Or, had the apoſtle been *led* to this acknowledgement by "*arguing rightly* that the promiſed deliverer could not perform more aſtoniſhing operations than Jeſus had done ‡," might not we juſtly attribute St. Peter's knowledge in *this caſe* to the *diſtinguiſhing grace* of God, although this information was *not* conveyed to him in the ſame manner in which the apoſtles, and he among the reſt, received that remarkable information on the day of Pentecoſt? And might not our Lord addreſs himſelf to St. Peter in the manner he has done, and pronounce him bleſſed as having received this knowledge by *divine*, though NOT by IMMEDIATE, revelation, without meaning

* Scripture Characters, vol. III. p. 320, or 375.

† Ibid. vol. IV. p. 224, or 269.

‡ Ibid. p. 345, or 416.

to

to aſſert that the apoſtle received this truth in the very ſame way by which Paul was made acquainted with the goſpel-diſpenſation *, or by which Cornelius was called into the Chriſtian church?

Are we then, upon the ſtrength of ſuch reaſoning, to be diſcontented with that *original* revelation of God, which has been made known to all nations through the *inſpired* apoſtles, according to HIS expreſs commandment for the obedience of faith †, as inſufficient for the purpoſe for which God intended it? Are we to expect, notwithſtanding all that has been done by Chriſt and his apoſtles, and all that aſſiſtance we are promiſed by the Holy Ghoſt, are we to expect, I ſay, farther and ſupernatural information in theſe days? Are we to affirm there is *ſtill* a *neceſſity* for what is called ‡ a *divine illumination*, and § a *ſpiritual revelation?* Are we to ſay, as is ſaid ‖, that the information we receive from *others* (the writers of the holy Scriptures ſuppoſe) *ought not* to *ſuffice* us? Now, if the information of holy men, who were inſtructed, as well as moved, by the Holy Ghoſt, *ought not* to ſuffice us, what clearer, what more certain, what higher ſort of, knowledge are we to look for, unleſs *immediate* revelation from God himſelf? But, if we are not to expect a di-

* 1 Cor. xv. 3; Gal. i. 12.

† Matt. xxviii. 19; Rom. xvi. 26.

‡ Scripture Characters, vol. I p. 8, or 10; vol. II. p. 5, or 6; vol. III. p. 304, or 357.

§ Ib. vol. I. p. 341, or 415; and vol. II. p. 242, or 288.

‖ Ib. vol. II. p. 305, or 363.

vine

vine revelation to be made *immediately* to ourſelves, as we are told *, of what uſe it is to inquire †, "whether our convictions of the truth are produced" (not in conſequence of the evidence of the apoſtles, and our attention to their evidence, but) "in conſequence of a DIVINE LIGHT, communicated to our *minds?*" And, if we are to expect a divine revelation in theſe days, of what uſe are the inſpired writers? But, if this communication of a divine light to our minds does not mean a divine revelation, what does it mean? Are we to ſay, with Mr. Newton ‡, "The Lord reveals *no* NEW truths to me; he only SHEWS me the MEANING of his written word?" What the Lord ſhews muſt be INFALLIBLY true. Yet we are told §, that infallibility is *not* NOW to be looked for. But who ever heard before of a revelation to diſcover OLD truths? Truths are *new*, or *old*, in reſpect to the mind which perceives them. There is no ſuch thing as *new* truths with reſpect to God. The truths of the Chriſtian diſpenſation were known to him from all eternity, becauſe this diſpenſation of grace was according to his own eternal purpoſe; yet, when he made known to the apoſtles the myſtery of his will, according to his good pleaſure, "this revelation was no leſs *extraordinary* than thoſe which he made to his ſervants the prophets ‖;

* Scripture Characters, vol. I. p. 185, or 228.

† Ib. vol. IV. p. 226, or 271.

‡ Cardiphonia, vol. I. p. 159, 167, 189.

§ Scripture Characters, vol. IV. p. 75, or 90.

‖ See Newton's Sermons at Olney, p. 50.

but

but, was the truth an *old* truth becauſe God had known it from all eternity? Paul ſeems to think it a *new* truth when he calls it the myſtery which was kept *ſecret*, being *hidden* from ages and generations, but which, he ſays, is NOW made *manifeſt*; and by the Scriptures (not by an ordinary revelation, *ib.*) made known to all nations. And, when Paul declared to the Corinthians the ſum and ſubſtance of that goſpel of which he was made a miniſter, he tells them, he delivered firſt of all that which he himſelf alſo firſt received, "how that Chriſt died," &c. He made no ſcruple to ſuppoſe that *he clearly* underſtood what had been miraculouſly conveyed to him; and as little to ſuppoſe that his hearers would *certainly* underſtand (without any ſupernatural aſſiſtance) what he conveyed to them by the uſual mode of communication, *i. e.* by means of language: he makes no diſtinction between an *ordinary* and an *extraordinary* kind of revelation *(ib.)*: he ſays nothing of an *ordinary* ſort of revelation vouchſafed to ALL *believers*, and NECESSARY to ſalvation. But this ordinary revelation (which, we are told, is *common* to ALL *believers* and *neceſſary* to ſalvation), Mr. Newton ſays, "ſuppoſes the things to be revealed were *real* and *certain* before, but *unknown*, and NOT to be *found out any* OTHER way." Do not all revelations ſuppoſe the things to be revealed to be real and certain before, *i. e.* before ſuch revelations were made, but *unknown*, and *not* to be *found out* any other way? And what information do we get by this wonderful diſcovery?

THE BIBLE is a moſt ſingular book. It is an *unique*; and has an indiſputable claim to the eminently diſtinctive appellation which has ſo long been beſtowed upon it. It contains an hiſtory of ſuch religion as God has thought proper to appoint in different ages of the world. The truth of this hiſtory ſtands upon the evidence of God himſelf, confirming the accounts given by his holy apoſtles and prophets by ſigns, and wonders, and mighty works. The reality of theſe miraculous powers vouchſafed to them ſtands upon the teſtimony of eye and ear witneſſes of indiſputable credibility. It is the province of human reaſon to examine into theſe matters of *fact*, and to *appreciate* the evidence there is for them. With the ſubject-matter of relation, if it contradict not the *character* of God as diſcoverable from his works *, reaſon has *no* concern. God gives not account of any of his matters; he ſubmits not his *general* appointments to the examination or judgement of his creatures. As the ſubject-matter of this book differs from that of all others, ſo the rules of interpreting it differ no leſs from thoſe which are applicable to ſuch writings as are *merely* human. To underſtand all other writings you enquire into the *uſual* and *received* ſenſe of the words uſed: but paſſages in the Bible muſt be interpreted by each other. Words are often uſed in a ſenſe not uſual in other writings. Thus, the word wiſdom is not always uſed for the perception of

* Warburton's Sermons, vol. I. p. 110, Serm. v.

truth

truth by the intellectual powers; when applied to God, it is often uſed for the accompliſhment of the *fitteſt* ends by the *fitteſt* means; when applied to men, it is uſed, not for a *ſtate* of the *underſtanding*, but of the DISPOSITIONS or AFFECTIONS, James iii. 17 *.

But not only the meaning, what is of no leſs importance, the *application* of the words is equally to be attended to. For, the Bible relating to different but cloſely-connected diſpenſations, of which the preceding were uſually preparatory to thoſe which followed, it often happens, and muſt happen, that words, uſed in their plain and literal ſignification, in the earlier diſpenſations, will be uſed in a metaphorical ſignification when applied to ſubſequent ones; and, if this difference be not attended to, much confuſion may ariſe, and men may be led to believe what is either impoſſible or unintelligible. The religious œconomy of the Jews was not only inſtituted, it was conducted, if I may ſo ſay, by the Deity in *perſon*; and his intercourſe, both with the patriarchs and the leaders of the Jews, was of courſe perſonal. And this was, it ſhould ſeem, a neceſſary matter. For, the Jews being to continue diſtinct and ſeparate from the reſt of mankind, a religion and a government of a kind leſs adapted to affect the *ſenſes* would have loſt much of that force, all of which was *more* than wanted, to reſtrain their inclination for mixing with the heathen.

* See Theological Eſſays, by W. Ludlam, Eſſay vi. p. 24, 25.

But, when this great partition-wall was broken down; when the beggarly elements of a meagre diſpenſation, which ſtood only in meats and drinks and divers waſhings, the ordinances of a carnal commandment, impoſed upon a ſmall and ſingle nation, were to give way to that more general and more glorious miniſtration of the Spirit, whoſe operations and whoſe bleſſings were to extend to the whole world, and all mankind were to become in their turns the *choſen* people of God (ſo far choſen as to have the offer of ſalvation made to them); not only a more general œconomy, but one leſs the object of ſenſe, or (in theological terms) more *ſpiritual*, was to take place: it being no longer neceſſary to apply to the *ſenſes* of mankind, and God being no longer to be worſhiped *ſo much* by rites and ceremonies as in ſpirit and in truth. A phraſeology, therefore, appropriate to the Jewiſh diſpenſation from being literally applied, was now to be underſtood in a more extenſive and *tranſlatitious* ſenſe. Nor is it to be wondered at, that perſons, inured by cuſtom and attached by principle to the old eſtabliſhment (and *ſuch* we may well ſuppoſe would be choſen as the fitteſt inſtruments for introducing the new), ſhould carry a mode of ſpeaking ſo familiar to them into that very different œconomy which was to take place. The various circumſtances of the Jewiſh nation ſuggeſted ideas which can no longer obtain; God's conſtant preſence among his people, ſo frequently manifeſted to their *ſenſes*, neceſſarily introduced the ideas of *dwelling* and *abode*. His

conſtant care and attention, ſo *viſibly* directed to their welfare and ſupport, during their various peregrinations, naturally ſuggeſted the idea of a ſhepherd: the people were his flock and his ſheep: the Jewiſh ſyſtem of temporal rewards and worldly happineſs connected the notions of preſent enjoyment which preſent themſelves to the mind, in mountainous and arid countries, of green paſtures and refreſhing ſtreams; and we find the Pſalmiſt, who was a poet, abounding in ſuch imagery: but where is the particular uſe or propriety of telling the common people in theſe days, that thoſe whoſe buſineſs it is to inſtruct them in their duty "deſire to recover them from their wandering ſtate, to bring them back to the fold of Chriſt, and *lead* them into his *green paſtures*, where are *ſafety* and *refreſhment* *?" Why not tell them theſe truths without a metaphor?

But, while the Bible gives an account of God's various diſpenſations in various ages of the world, men are not at liberty to argue from the *mode* of one diſpenſation to that of another, unleſs they are ſpecially warranted by expreſs declarations; for, (as we are very properly told, vol. I. p. 3, or 4,) "where revelation does not reſolve us, it becomes us to be ſilent, or to confeſs our ignorance."

It appears from the Jewiſh Scriptures, that, in the early ages of the world, God maintained frequent and SENSIBLE intercourſe with men. The inſtances are too numerous and too notorious to

* Scripture Characters, vol. III. p. 278, or 326.

make it neceſſary to quote them. It appears, alſo, that in proceſs of time this *ſenſible* intercourſe gradually diminiſhed, both in frequency and in degree. In the days of Samuel, we are told, the *word* of the Lord was precious; for in that age there was NO *open viſion*. But, are we authoriſed by the Chriſtian revelation to expect a *like* communication, or (as it is, I believe, not unfrequently termed) communion with God, and to have the *teſtimony* of our *ſenſes* for the reality of ſuch communication or communion? For, if it be only a matter of *faith*, then, from the very nature of *that* proof, experience is altogether out of the queſtion. Where experience takes place, *faith* is made VOID. If, then, ſuch language is uſed as muſt of neceſſity induce and encourage ordinary Chriſtians to expect ſuch *ſenſible* intercourſe with God, whether it be to *direct* their *conduct* or *inform* their *underſtandings*, a door muſt be opened to the moſt extravagant actions and the moſt extravagant opinions, under the ſanction of *divine* authority. It is an opinion of ſuch ſort of intercourſe with God which is the ground of all enthuſiaſm and fanaticiſm. What effect ſuch opinions may be expected to have upon the tempers and conduct of mankind, paſt experience may ſufficiently inſtruct us: and if mere aſſertion, unſupported by proper credentials, be deemed ſufficient to eſtabliſh a claim to ſuch intercourſe, ALL religion muſt be at an end; like the dove ſent out of the ark, FAITH will have no place whereon to ſet her foot. The queſtion is not whether we are to doubt

doubt or diſpute God's *acceſs* to the *minds* of men, his *aſſiſtance* to their *mental* powers, and his *influence* upon their *diſpoſitions*, ſuch as is deſcribed in the Chriſtian Scriptures (and of which an account may be given equally conſonant to reaſon and revelation *); but whether we are to expect the *evidence* of SENSE, in LIEU of the *authority* of FAITH, for ſuch acceſs, ſuch aſſiſtance, ſuch influence; and whether intercourſe with God is NOW to be the object of EXPERIMENTAL knowledge.

But it will be ſaid that all miſtake on this head is ſufficiently guarded againſt; for, the reader is warned, "that, though men are now under the higheſt obligation to *ſeek* the Lord, yet we are not to expect the SAME *kind* of *immediate* revelations" (are there, then, different kinds of immediate revelation?); "nevertheleſs, he will ſtill be found of them that ſeek him in a very important ſenſe †." To be ſure he will. And if we had been diſtinctly told *what* this important ſenſe is, and *how* we are to underſtand the *nature* and benefit of ſuch applications, no fault could have been found. But it is very much this writer's cuſtom to leave matters unexplained; and very much his practice to leave his readers to draw ſuch concluſions as he may not chuſe to avow himſelf. So we are aſked ‡, "is there no Bethel *where* the Lord hath bleſſed us?" What! in the *ſame viſible* manner? Were thoſe, who are convinced by *reaſon* of God's provi-

* See Eſſay II.

† Scripture Characters, vol. I. p. 185, or 228. ‡ Ibid.

dence, and who *feel* by experience the effects of God's goodneſs, to ſet up pillars on occaſion of every bleſſing they receive from him, they would have little elſe to do.

In vol. I. p. 81, or 99, we are told, "Abram is propoſed as a *repreſentation* of the only method in which God will juſtify a ſinner, *viz.* by faith in Jeſus Chriſt: Abram was ſo juſtified; for, it was "his faith" which was counted unto him for righteouſneſs. Theſe words are ſo placed as to lead ninety-nine out of an hundred common readers to ſuppoſe that the faith for which Abraham is celebrated, Romans iv. 3, Gen. xv. 6, was FAITH in JESUS CHRIST, and ſo to countenance a *favourite opinion* of many pious men. So Mr. Venn ſays *, "when he" (Abraham) "believed in the Lord, IT, that is to ſay, *what* was *promiſed*, *what* his *faith received*, and on *which* it *terminated*, even CHRIST, was counted to him for righteouſneſs." Now, without enquiring what that truth was which Abraham believed, is it poſſible that *what* he believed could be counted to him for righteouſneſs? It was his belief of the declaration of God in *general*, of the *divine veracity*, not of that *particular* truth which might happen to be the object of it. It was the mere *act* of *believing* that was counted to him for righteouſneſs: he (Abraham) *believed in the Lord* (not in this or that particular truth, but he believed *in* the *Lord*), and IT, *viz.* his *faith*, NOT the *object*

* See his Zacharias, p. 34.

of

of it, was counted to him for righteouſneſs. His belief in this caſe was no more a *repreſentation* of the *method* in which God will juſtify a ſinner, than the faith of Noah or any other of the patriarchs was;—and how could it? for, the method in which God will juſtify a ſinner is not by faith in the *divine* VERACITY, but faith in the EFFICACY of the BLOOD of Chriſt. If we can read, here is neither mention nor even the ſlighteſt intimation of Chriſt, upon whom, Mr. Venn ſays, his faith reſted and terminated. "Look," ſays the Lord, "towards heaven, and tell (count) the ſtars, if thou be able to number them; SO SHALL THY SEED BE." The matter, then, which was promiſed, what his faith received, and on which it terminated (to uſe Mr. Venn's words), was NOT Chriſt, but a *numerous offspring*, ſo numerous as not to be reckoned up, which God here declared (not promiſed) ſhould ſpring from him. We cannot, therefore, but admire the addreſs of our author, who has a great deal too much diſcernment boldly to affirm, with Mr. Venn, that it was a belief in Chriſt which in this caſe was counted to Abraham for righteouſneſs; and yet did not chuſe to write in ſuch a manner as to detect the blunder of his unqueſtionably pious and worthy friend. It is to be ſure very ſtrange, but ſo it is, when a favourite ſyſtem is to be ſupported, ſenſe, meaning, connexion, context, grammar, and reaſon, are all to be ſet at nought.

The principal end of the apoſtle, in the fourth chapter of the epiſtle to the Romans, is not ſo much

to

to run a parallel between the mode by which Abraham was received, and by which repenting and believing ſinners may be received, into the *preſent* favour of God, *i. e.* into ſuch a degree of it as he may think proper (which is the only meaning of being juſtified); but to ſhew how it happened that the Gentiles, who were aliens from the commonwealth of Iſrael, and ſtrangers to the Jewiſh covenant, might yet, conſiſtently with God's juſtice and his engagements in conſequence of that covenant, be admitted to the benefits of thoſe promiſes which had been *confined* to the Jews, and were *never* made to the Heathen. "Therefore," ſays the apoſtle, Rom. iv. 16, "it (the bleſſing) is of *faith*, *that* it might be by GRACE;" NOT A CLAIM upon promiſes, not a DEBT due to the fulfilment of an engagement, but a FREE-GIFT; for the belief of a declaration implies not obligation. And this admiſſion of the Gentiles to the privileges of the Jews (a matter ſo very offenſive to them that even a miracle was required to reconcile the apoſtles to it) is the great purpoſe of the epiſtle to the Romans.

In the ſame artful way we are told *, "there is a *univerſal neceſſity* for a *divine* ILLUMINATION; for, the human underſtanding is darkened, and reaſon † an inſufficient guide." Now here is much falſehood under the ſemblance of ſome truth. If this divine illumination mean the light of the *Chriſtian revelation*; if the darkneſs of the human under-

* Scripture Characters, vol. I. p. 21, or 26.

† Ib. p. 66, or 82.

ſtanding

ſtanding mean a *wilful* darkneſs—that men love darkneſs rather than light (John iii. 19), ignorance than information; if it mean that they diſlike and ſhun the knowledge which ſhews them the dangerous ſtate they are in, and the dreadful conſequences of offending God; if the inſufficiency of human reaſon mean that reaſon cannot point out the way by which *ſinners* may be reconciled to God and reſtored to his favour; all *this* is in perfect conſonance with Scripture. But, if theſe expreſſions are deſigned to inſinuate that *more* and *further* information than what is revealed, that *more* and *further* aſſiſtance than what is promiſed in the New Teſtament, is *ſtill* neceſſary, and, when vouchſafed, is the object of *ſenſe*; that, in conſequence of the ſin of Adam, men's abilities are ſo weakened, that they either cannot underſtand the Scripture at all, or, at leaſt, not in ſuch a degree as God intended when he gave it by inſpiration from himſelf; that human reaſon is an inſufficient guide to inform us what revelations have *actually* come from God originally, and to aſcertain the evidence there is both for the *reality* of revelation, the *authenticity* of the Scriptures which contain it, and the *quantity* of them; we make no ſcruple to affirm, that SUCH aſſertions have neither ſupport nor countenance from Holy Writ.

So again we are told *, "Chriſtians muſt maintain communion and intercourſe with God, and ſhould enjoy a holy *familiarity* with him." If theſe

* Scripture Characters, vol. I. p. 38, or 48.

words

words mean no more than that Chriſtians ſhould cultivate pious diſpoſitions and devout affections, and ſhould walk worthy of the vocation wherewith they are called, there can be no doubt or diſpute about the matter. But, if it is meant to inſinuate, that this communion, or intercourſe, is to be the ſame, or of a like ſort as that, with which many holy men of old were favoured; and that we may expect to have, as they had, the evidence of *ſenſe* for this intercourſe, this communion, this holy familiarity; we think the New Teſtament affords not the leaſt ſhadow of a foundation for ſuch expectation. Enoch, to be ſure, walked with God, and might maintain communion and intercourſe, and enjoy holy familiarity with him (though not one word is ſaid of this in Scripture); but Enoch was a prophet, Jude v. 14; and ſo Iſaiah SAW the Lord ſitting upon a throne high and lifted up, and he HEARD what the Seraphim ſaid to one another: but are we to expect the like? And, if the prophets had not been favoured with *ſenſible* evidence of this wonderful intercourſe, how were they to have known their own character, and the proper exerciſe of their office? The prophetic knowledge was often vouchſafed to them by viſible ſymbols. "But the apoſtles alſo had communion and fellowſhip with the Father and the Son." What then? Excepting in the inſtance of St. Paul, and in the caſe of the miraculous powers, was ſuch communion and fellowſhip aſcertained to them by the *evidence* of SENSE? Fellowſhip implies a ſimilarity of diſpoſitions, deſires,

ſires, deſigns. This undoubtedly every private Chriſtian may have. They had alſo fellowſhip OF the Holy Ghoſt. They received immediately from him the neceſſary powers to qualify them for their office. They had fellowſhip with the ſufferings of Chriſt. They ſuffered with him: not in his company; but they ſuffered in the *like* manner, and for the *like* reaſons: they ſuffered for righteouſneſs' ſake. The ſame afflictions were accompliſhed in them. They had alſo fellowſhip with one another. And ſo far as ſuch fellowſhip is not confined to the apoſtles by its being miraculous, every private Chriſtian not only may, but, in many particulars, OUGHT to have it.

As this manner of ſpeaking muſt probably lead ordinary Chriſtians to expect *immediate* and *ſenſible* communications from God; ſo a mode of ſpeaking is alſo uſed, equally adapted to induce them to expect *particular*, and therefore *ſenſible*, directions from him. Religion, we are told *, will teach us to CONSULT the will of the Lord; for, in every *minute* particular, the will of the Lord ſhould *direct* our PLANS †; and it is aſked ‡, whether *we* are *ready* to *go wherever* the Lord ſhall CALL, and to *follow* our GUIDE §: and we are further told, it is indiſpenſibly neceſſary that we *ſeek* God's DIREC-

* Scripture Characters, vol. II. p. 82. 336, or 100. 399.

† Ib. p. 208, or 248.

‡ Ib. p. 232, or 276.

§ Ib. p. 233, or 277.

TIONS:

TIONS: and * we are to wait *his* time, and go forth at *his* CALL †, if God EVIDENTLY lead the way ‡.

Now are we to underſtand *this direction* of the Lord, which we are exhorted to ſeek, and told to follow, to mean *particular* directions (miraculouſly) given to each individual, according to the particular circumſtances in which he may be placed? And, unleſs theſe directions are miraculouſly given, how are we to know them from the mere natural ſuggeſtions of our own underſtanding? Or are we to ſuppoſe ourſelves *paſſive* in every inſtance? And what then becomes of thoſe numerous *precepts* reſpecting conduct? And, when we are told to go forth at God's *call*, and to follow him as our *guide*, are we to *expect* this call and theſe directions to be ſignified to us, as they were to the patriarchs and the leaders of the Jews of old? And that we are to have the *teſtimony* of our *ſenſes*, as they had, for the interpoſition of God in our affairs? Or are we only to underſtand it of thoſe *general* precepts and promiſes, which are contained in the Goſpel, to which our Lord refers, when he ſays, "If any man will *do* his *will*," John vii. 17; "He that *doeth* the *will* of my Father," Matthew vii. 21; "Whoſoever ſhall *do* the *will* of God," Mark iii. 35: and which the apoſtles mean, when they exhort their followers to *do* the *will* of *God:* to ſtand complete in *all* the *will* of God, being filled with the knowledge of his *will:*

* Scripture Characters, vol. IV. p. 197, or 237.

† Ib. ‡ Ib. p. 246, or 296.

that knowledge, namely, which *they* were (miraculouſly) enabled to ſpread amongſt mankind by their preaching while living, and by their writings when dead: and which, we preſume, our author himſelf means, when he inquires *, "whether we deſire to *do* the WHOLE *will* of God." It is, to be ſure, undoubtedly true, that God ruleth over all beings and all events, that all things are in his hands. It is no leſs true, that his ears are open to the prayers of ſuch as call upon him faithfully, and that good men may expect his *bleſſing* in *anſwer* to their prayers: and it is for THIS *reaſon*, that they are commanded to pray unto him. Yet does he not uſually inform us, nor are we enabled to diſcover, what events happen in conſequence of our prayers. And when we are exhorted †, "*not* to *deſiſt* TILL ſome favourable anſwer be received," how are we to aſcertain this matter? "May we not" (to borrow our author's words ‡) "eaſily impoſe upon ourſelves, and interpret events as anſwers to our prayers, and imagine that God is favouring our requeſts, when perhaps we are only contriving to gratify our own corrupt deſires?" But ſurely we may BELIEVE the ſuperintendance of God's providence without KNOWING the particular *manner* and *time* in which it operates; for, if we did KNOW the particular manner and time, FAITH would be ſwallowed up in KNOWLEDGE:—juſt as we may enter-

* Scripture Characters, vol II. p. 49, or 61.

† Ib. vol. I. p. 181, or 223.

‡ Ib. vol. II. p. 85, or 105.

tain

tain the fulleſt confidence in our Lord's atonement without being able to ſpecify the circumſtances on which the validity of it depends, or how it operates to the pardon (not the acquittal*, for that were impoſſible) *only* of repenting and believing ſinners. It ought to be ſufficient for us to *know* that God hath *declared* that the blood of Chriſt cleanſeth us from all ſin, in one caſe; and that his eyes are over the righteous, and his ears are open to their prayers, in the other; 1 John, i. 7; Pſalm xxxiv. 15.

But if a miſtaken application of God's former and ſpecial diſpenſations may have given riſe to this very improper mode of ſpeaking, what are we to allege in behalf of one which has nothing at all to plead in its ſupport; when the great truths of the goſpel (which were *not* communicated by our Lord himſelf during his abode on earth to his immediate followers, but in a miraculous manner to the apoſtles after his aſcenſion by the Holy Ghoſt) are continually ſpoken of as being communicated to *believers* in *theſe days* by the Redeemer himſelf; as if the knowledge of Chriſtianity were not now to be gained from the inſpired writings of the apoſtles, tranſmitted to us for this very purpoſe, and from them ONLY, but from the PERSONAL *teaching* of our Lord Jeſus Chriſt? Thus we are exhorted †, "to ſeek the ACQUAINTANCE of the Saviour:" and, that we may be more ſurely led to underſtand this expreſſion—NOT in a *metaphorical* ſenſe, for the ac-

* Scripture Characters, vol. III. p. 232, or 275.

† Ib. p. 69, or 84.

quiſition

quiſition of ſuch knowledge as we receive, and ONLY CAN *receive*, from the apoſtolic writings (a metaphor, by-the-by, no where uſed by the apoſtles), but in the *literal* and uſual ſenſe of the word *acquaintance*, for *perſonal* knowledge and familiarity, we are further informed *, that "He MEETS ſuch with EXPRESSIONS of *his kindneſs*, and *admits* them to a FAMILIAR intercourſe with himſelf." And the familiarity of this intercouſe to which they are admitted, we are told †, will be in proportion to our love: that he *affords* them the moſt *gracious encouragement* ‡; and *prevents* their enquiries by REVEALING himſelf to them. So again §, men are exhorted to *cultivate* an acquaintance with Jeſus; are aſked upon what teſtimony their faith is built? whether it *reſts* entirely upon the *accounts* of *others?* One would have thought it ſufficient to reply, that it was "built upon the foundation of the apoſtles and prophets." But no; we are not to believe, it ſhould ſeem, becauſe of the ſayings of others (be they who they may), "but becauſe WE have HEARD HIM OURSELVES;" for, "if with a teachable diſpoſition we *aſk* how we are to conceive of him, or what regard is due to him, HE HIMSELF WILL INSTRUCT US ‖!" And to be ſure, if "*information* from *others* ought *not* to *ſuffice* us," as we

* Scripture Characters, vol. III. p. 73, or 88.
† Ibid. vol. IV. p. 254, or 306.
‡ Ibid. vol. III. p. 69, or 84.
§ Ibid. p. 107, or 129.
‖ Ibid. vol. III. p. 424, or 496.

are expreſsly told *, no other ſource of knowledge is left us.

So when men are moved (by God's bleſſing upon the uſe of that reaſon which he has given them for this very purpoſe) to attend to the great truths of Chriſtianity, they are ſaid † to "ſeek the *acquaintance* of Jeſus;" and when their conduct is influenced by theſe truths, this influence is called "an *attachment* to Jeſus ‡;" and miniſters are now to be *acquainted* with him, and to be furniſhed with *inſtructions from* him; and then they are not only to ſpeak what they do know, but, like the apoſtles, to teſtify *what* they *have* SEEN §.—And have any miniſters in theſe days ocular proof of goſpel-truths as the apoſtles had? But not only miniſters—their *hearers* are to take their inſtructions, not from the written Scriptures and the preaching of God's word, but from Jeſus; and it is enquired ‖, whether they are "*ſitting* at Jeſus's *feet*, and looking to him for inſtruction?" and we are exhorted ¶, to be "willing to *ſit* like Nicodemus at *Jeſus's feet*, and to *hear* his words." They are further recommended ** to liſten to their divine teacher, "who is worthy of all acceptation;" and yet Paul, whoſe words theſe

* Scripture Characters, vol. II. p. 305, or 363.
† Ibid. vol. III. p. 188, or 223.
‡ Ibid. p. 189, or 224.
§ Ibid. p. 212, or 252.
‖ Ibid. p. 294, or 345.
¶ Ibid. p. 83, or 101.
** Ibid. p. 378, or 443.

are,

are, applies them, not to Chriſt, but to (what is a very different matter) his doctrine. So Chriſt is ſaid to *reveal* HIMSELF, and to *manifeſt* HIMSELF *. What then are we to underſtand by ſuch *revelation* and *manifeſtation*, by this acquaintance and intercourſe with Chriſt, of which we hear ſo much? Is it that Chriſt NOW diſcovers ſuch truths *miraculouſly* to men's minds, which they cannot diſcover themſelves in the written word; as the Holy Ghoſt diſcovered miraculouſly ſuch truth to the mind of the apoſtles, which they could not diſcover by any means in their power? Why, no: for we are told †, that we muſt not NOW expect IMMEDIATE revelation; nor, what is the *neceſſary* conſequence of it, INFALLIBILITY ‡. Or is it that he diſcovers his perſon to their *ſenſes*, as he did to St. Paul? But neither this: becauſe we are told §, that we have not his perſonal miniſtry; for that his bodily preſence is not neceſſary ‖, but that it is withdrawn ¶; and again **, that we do not look for *ſuch* revelations.

All this way of repreſenting the knowledge of goſpel-truth as the immediate effect of Chriſt's preſent and perſonal teaching (a way never uſed, a

* Scripture Characters, vol. III. p. 69, 297, or 84, 348.
† Ibid. vol. I. p. 185, or 228.
‡ Ibid. vol. IV. p. 75, or 90.
§ Ibid. vol. III. p. 119, or 143.
‖ Ibid. p. 110, or 127.
¶ Ibid. vol. IV. p. 76, or 91.
** Ibid. p. 227, or 273.

mode of preaching never employed, by the apoſtles) will perhaps be called only a *figurative* repreſentation. Metaphor, it will be ſaid, has nothing to do with truth or falſehood; and that no perſons of common ſenſe can poſſibly be miſled by it. Much the ſame thing has been ſaid in defence of the images and paintings in the Romiſh church; yet our author, we have reaſon to think, would conſider this expedient to excite the devotion of the common people as not a little dangerous.

Had our Lord's diſpoſitions and conduct, diſplayed in his readineſs to relieve the diſtreſſes of his creatures with whom he was perſonally converſant, been urged as encouragements to apply to him now for relief of ſpiritual diſtreſſes, no fault could have been found. But when the *only certain* ſource of *divine knowledge* in *theſe* days, the accounts of others (who were inſpired), is deemed *uſeleſs* or *inſignificant* in compariſon of our Lord's *immediate* and *perſonal* teaching; this mode of repreſenting things is no more to be juſtified than the practice of thoſe who repreſent the ſcripture metaphor of being *born again* as implying many circumſtances of the natural birth, which are as little warranted as intended by this figurative expreſſion.

But, however ſlight the foundation may appear for repreſenting our preſent knowledge of goſpel-truth as the effect of our Lord's immediate and perſonal teaching; and though it is hard to ſay what benefit there can be in, and what reaſon for, ſuch a *fanciful* repreſentation; yet there is ſtill leſs foundation, and

not

not a whit more advantage, in applying a ſingle miracle, or the ſtate of mind manifeſted by an apoſtle under the immediate and ſudden ſurprize of an uncommon, and as it ſhould ſeem, very terrifying viſion, to the condition of believers in theſe days. Two out of the three evangeliſts, who relate this event of the transfiguration, affirm that Peter either *knew not what to* ſay, or *what* he *did* ſay. Nothing is related of the other two witneſſes; nor can any one tell what was meant by this Jewiſh compliment of three tabernacles. But what has, or what can all this have, to do with Chriſtians in theſe days? It may confirm, indeed, if it want confirmation, the relation in which Chriſt ſtood to God, and which was more than once declared by a ſimilar voice from heaven. But no information is given us in Scripture reſpecting the particular *deſign* of this miraculous appearance. And what is this *ſpiritual preſence* of Chriſt which believers are to ENJOY *? Is it an object of ſenſe? For, if it be only an object of *faith*, how are they to KNOW *when* they ENJOY it?—Why, when they "are taken up into the mount along with him †." And what are we to underſtand by Chriſtians being *now* taken up into the mount with Chriſt? The apoſtles never ſpeak of any ſuch aſſumption; nor do *they* talk of theſe *diſtinguiſhed* ſeaſons when Chriſtians are SO TAKEN UP. Chriſtians, to be ſure, may believe with perfect confidence whatever is re-

* Scripture Characters, vol. IV. p. 227, or 273. † Ibid.

vealed; and they may rejoice in thoſe unſpeakable bleſſings which are offered to them in Jeſus; in the *certainty* and the value of them—a value heightened by conſiderations for multitude and importance not to be enumerated. But is the temper and diſpoſition of mind, which muſt follow upon the contemplation of theſe bleſſings, miraculous? Surely not. Like the love of Chriſt ſhed abroad in the hearts of believers by the Holy Ghoſt, they follow *naturally*, one ſhould almoſt think *neceſſarily*, from the truths which this gracious Spirit has revealed reſpecting this aſtoniſhing work of redemption. Indeed, the incarnation, ſufferings, and death, of Chriſt, and the benefits vouchſafed to ſuch as accept his ſalvation, afford matter for the continual, the nobleſt, the ſublimeſt exerciſe of every faculty of the human mind, without having recourſe to this *fantaſtical* imagination of being taken up into the mount along with him. And theſe *diſtinguiſhed* ſeaſons can never be wanting to thoſe who make the attentive conſideration of theſe ſubjects the frequent employment of their underſtandings, the frequent matter of their meditations.

The paucity of the human ideas, and the ſcantineſs of human language which is to expreſs them, in conjunction with the particular circumſtances under which Chriſtianity was to be introduced to the world *, would make a figurative mode of repreſenting it almoſt unavoidable. The ſuperior force

* See Powell's Sermons, p. 222.

of

of *ſenſible* proof to that of the more abſtract kinds; the eaſe with which applications are made to the imagination, and the apparent *approach* of theſe applications to *ſenſible* proof in the judgement of the bulk of mankind; may well account for that fondneſs for imagery ſo remarkable in the generality; and the attention ſhewn to the fanciful works of the celebrated Mr. Hervey ſtrongly corroborates theſe obſervations—works which would never have faſcinated ſuch a multitude of readers had the underſtandings of mankind been as capable of information as their imaginations are ſuſceptible of impreſſions. It is generally ſuppoſed that ſome of the earlieſt miſtakes among Chriſtians aroſe from a miſunderſtanding of the metaphors employed by the inſpired writers; and, perhaps, a figurative way of ſpeaking uſed by our Lord himſelf may have given riſe to an opinion which ſo ſtrongly and ſo extenſively divides the Chriſtian world at this day. Reaſons theſe which ſhould induce pious and ſenſible men to be exceedingly cautious how they introduce new metaphors into divinity, and exceedingly careful to explain the *nature* and *extent* of ſuch as are actually to be found in Scripture; ſeeing how liable they are to be abuſed, and how plainly the great foundations of enthuſiaſm and fanaticiſm are laid in an injudicious exchange of FAITH for EXPERIENCE.

We cannot but lament that a writer, who poſſeſſes a vigour and acuteneſs of underſtanding equal to thoſe of the cleareſt mind, ſhould continually

expreſs himſelf with a degree of obſcurity not to be exceeded by the moſt confuſed. I will not bring a charge, like ſome others, without ſupporting it. We are told *, "In no inſtance will the Lord finally diſappoint thoſe expectations which are grounded on his word." To be ſure he will not. "But *they* may be *delayed* a while," (not the expectations, ſurely, but the fulfilment of them,) "to ſtrengthen" (to try, one ſhould think, for it ſeems a ſtrange way of ſtrengthening,) "and to manifeſt our faith and patience;" (to whom can our faith and patience, reſpecting our own expectations, be manifeſted?) "but, if we are willing to wait, we ſhall in due time obtain the bleſſing" (*i. e.* the bleſſing promiſed): "and it will be doubly ſweet and precious *if* we can ſee the hand of God beſtowing it, and we ourſelves have reſolutely refuſed to purſue any undue meaſures to obtain it." We cannot but ſee the hand of God beſtowing it: for, if *he* has *promiſed* to beſtow it, who elſe can beſtow it? And if he has *not* promiſed to beſtow it, our expectations cannot be grounded on his word. And what are thoſe bleſſings, the expectations of which are grounded on *his* word, that we *can obtain* by undue meaſures? And can that be the Lord's bleſſing which is obtained by *undue* meaſures? And what are thoſe *undue* meaſures by which we *can obtain* the *Lord's bleſſings?*

* Scripture Characters, vol. II. p. 102, or 125.

It

It is remarked *, "that men are unwilling to *accept* the ſalvation provided for them" (juſt as if ſalvation reſembled any other gift) "by *ſubmitting* to Jeſus, and fixing their whole reliance upon him." Now, if *ſubmitting* to Jeſus means ſubmitting to his commands (John xv. 14), to be ſure men are unwilling to lead holy lives: but, if it means ſubmitting to receive eternal life and happineſs from him (after they have enjoyed the pleaſures of ſin for as long a ſeaſon as poſſible) by relying upon him, *i. e.* by *believing* the efficacy of what he has done and ſuffered in the character of Saviour; however fooliſh ſinners may be, and how much ſoever certain divines may inſiſt upon human pride, I believe no ſinners were ever proud or fooliſh enough to refuſe calling him Lord, Lord, and *ſo far* to "apprehend the croſs by faith †," if they might be excuſed from complying with his commands. But "a free declaration of the myſteries of faith, and a particular application of them to the *conſciences* of the hearers, will generally," it is ſaid ‡, "excite offence." To be ſure, the free declaration of a judgement to come, and of the denunciations of God's wrath againſt impenitent and unbelieving ſinners (a part of the revealed myſteries of faith), cannot but be highly unwelcome to ſuch whoſe conduct may ſubject them to it. But what is this application of the *myſ-*

* Scripture Characters, vol. III. p. 300, or 352.

† Ibid. vol. IV. p. 114, or 137.

‡ Ibid. vol. III. p. 305, or 358.

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teries of faith to the *conſciences* of the hearers? Certainly theſe truths of the goſpel are a pretty ſtrong application to the fears of mankind; and ſo St. Paul thought when he ſtyles a knowledge of them a knowledge of the TERROR of the Lord, 2 Cor. v. 11: and he thought it alſo a proper ground for perſuaſion, though we are told *, "the moſt ſtriking facts, ſolid reaſonings, and eloquent perſuaſions, will not be ſufficient to reach the human heart, unleſs God put forth his power, and make uſe of them for *that* purpoſe." Surely, when the wrath of God is *revealed* from *heaven* againſt all ungodlineſs and unrighteouſneſs of men, and when he ſupports and confirms the truth of his revelation by a ſeries of the moſt aſtoniſhing miracles, he DOES PUT FORTH HIS POWER; and, when he provides that the knowledge of theſe important and intereſting truths ſhall come to every creature, Mark xvi. 15, he makes all the uſe of them poſſible. If men are to be influenced by MORAL motives, it is impoſſible to conceive any that can be ſtronger than ſuch as are urged in the goſpel, nor a more general or cloſer application of ſuch motives to induce men to live ſoberly, righteouſly, and godlily, in the world—the great end and deſign, as God himſelf tells us, of this diſpenſation. But, if the conduct of mankind is to be produced in a different manner, they are no longer under a *moral* governor, nor are treated as rational, moral, or free beings.

* Scripture Characters, vol. IV. p. 356, or 429.

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It is not of the *nature* of either truth or of intelligent beings, that it ſhall carry with it *neceſſary* or irreſiſtible conviction; that *nature* which God has appointed: and it is as little of the nature of either that knowledge ſhould be applied to the human conſcience; no, not to the *enlightened* conſcience *. You might as well think of applying a demonſtration of the theory of ſound, or that of colours, to the conſcience. The moral faculty in man is concerned with, and can decide upon, no other ſubject than the morality of intentions, or of actions as a mark of them. It has its name from the judgement it paſſes, and is intended by our Creator to paſs, upon human actions, or the principle from which they flow. It has no more concern with the *revealed* myſteries of the goſpel (for with ſuch as are *not* revealed no human faculty can have any concern) than it has with the longitude. But, ſome way or other, the intellectual and moral faculties in man (thoſe faculties by which alone we can receive all natural knowledge of God and man, and by which the reality of all revealed knowledge muſt be aſcertained;—I ſpeak as to wiſe men, who can judge of what I ſay) are now eſteemed moſt hoſtile to piety and unfriendly to religion—as if we were to return to the old popiſh maxim, that "ignorance is the mother of devotion." Is it then that the intellectual faculties have been miſapplied? is it that the moral faculties have been corrupted? "We

* Meſſiah, vol. I. p. 150.

grant

grant they may have been corrupted to bad and dangerous purpoſes, but the abuſe does not detract from their uſefulneſs or excellence *." We need not, however, wonder; ſince it is alſo the misfortune of ſome even of the moſt amiable of the affections to meet with no better a reception: we are told †, that "it may be frequently *dangerous* to liſten to the dictates of *compaſſion*." For what purpoſe ſuch a maxim is introduced into a book of practical religion (for civil polity is not the ſubject of it) is hard to ſay:—it may, indeed, be well adapted to ſuch as wiſh to teach religion upon true popiſh principles.

Many more expreſſions, ſimilar to ſuch as have been above noticed, are to be found in this pious and well-meant work; but theſe are ſufficient to ſhew that what has been quoted is not merely a caſual, and therefore a ſingle, expreſſion. All this way of ſpeaking of the *perſonal* teaching of Jeſus is, indeed, UNSAID in other parts of this work (a practice not unuſual with writers of a certain ſort); and, inſtead of being repreſented as inſtructing men himſelf ‡, we are told §, what is very true but ſurely ſomewhat different, that "he waits upon men in the MINISTRY of the word." Inſtead of "deigning to viſit us himſelf ‖," he draws near by

* Scripture Characters, vol III. p. 89, or 108.
† Ibid. vol. II. p. 208, or 248.
‡ Ibid. vol. III. p. 424, or 496.
§ Ibid. p. 345, or 404.
‖ Ibid. p. 221, or 261.

"the

"the miniſtry of his ſervants *." And ſo, inſtead of being exhorted to liſten to their divine teacher, who is worthy of all acceptation †, they are exhorted to (what is ſomewhat more practicable) liſten to thoſe who would *declare* him ‡;—here it ſeems they are to receive the accounts of *others*, contrary to what we were told §.

Inconſiſtency, indeed, both with themſelves and their friends, is not uncommon. "God himſelf," ſays our author, "is pleaſed to *accompliſh* what he does by EXTERNAL means ‖; and afflictions are generally made uſe of in the *great work* of converſion." If I underſtand "the great work of converſion," it means the ſame as being *born* again; yet we are told ¶, that "*no* EXTERNAL *means* can change the heart;" nevertheleſs, it ſeems, "ſharp troubles will often *conſtrain* thoſe who have been moſt averſe from Chriſt to implore his preſence and aſſiſtance **."

So ſometimes men are to *feel* the *energy* of the Spirit ††; or to be favoured with *precious emanations* ‡‡. *What* this energy is, and *when* it acts, or what is the *nature* and *effect* of theſe *precious ema-*

* Scripture Characters, vol. III. p. 107, or 129.
† Ibid. p. 378, or 443.
‡ Ibid. vol. IV. p. 337, or 406.
§ Ibid. vol. II. p. 305, or 363.
‖ Ibid. p. 302, or 359.
¶ Ibid. vol. IV. p. 419, or 506.
** Ibid. vol. III. p. 108, or 130.
†† Ibid. p. 465, or 545.
‡‡ Ibid. vol. IV. p. 404, large edit. only.

nations,

nations, no man can tell, for Scripture ſays nothing about either. It ſays, indeed, that God *worketh* in us to *will* and to *do*; but it no where ſays that we ſhall be ſenſible of the *nature* or *time* of this operation, however perceptible its effects may be. Sometimes theſe *technical* terms are changed for plainer and more intelligible language, and more conſonant to Scripture; and this effect is called "the powerful *influence* of divine truth;"—in the large edition it is "*energy* *."

"God's appointments," it is ſaid, "are weak in themſelves †." Be it ſo. This *apparent* weakneſs in human eſtimation has generally been held by theologians ‡ a ſtronger evidence of divine power. But this weakneſs of God's appointments is not to be admitted in the caſe of ſacrifices. Theſe, we are told §, "were *chiefly valuable*" (they had then it ſeems *ſome* value of their own) "as referring to Chriſt;" though I do not find that Scripture makes any mention of this reference:—why no? But we are told ‖, "the SAME NATURE THAT SINNED ATONED. Be it ſo. But what then becomes, I do not ſay of the *arguments*, but of the aſſertions of the celebrated Dr. Hawker, who affirms (for he *proves* nothing) that "the divinity of Jeſus ¶ is the chief

* Scripture Characters, vol. IV. p. 82, or 99.

† Ibid. vol. III. p. 421, or 492.

‡ See Biſhop Sherlock's Diſcourſes, Serm. III.

§ Scripture Characters, vol. I. p. 346, or 421.

‖ Ibid. vol. III. p. 29, or 35.

¶ In his Eſſay on that ſubject, p. 8.

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corner-ſtone in the edifice of Chriſtianity. Remove this," ſays he, "from the building, and the whole fabric immediately totters: the foundation is ſhaken to its very center." "There *appears*," he goes on, "an *evident diſproportion* between the *end* and the *means*, the *importance* of the object propoſed, and the *perſon* by whom it was accompliſhed; and THEN the *great* doctrine of *atonement* by the blood of its author FALLS to the ground." Now, if the SAME nature which *ſinned atoned*, the divine nature can have no concern in the atonement, for ſurely the divine nature did not ſin. Is this Scripture or right reaſon?—or is it the fruit of that ſpiritual underſtanding and ſpiritual diſcernment of which we hear ſo much?

Adam, we are told *, was led away by his ſenſual deſires in contradiction to the voice of reaſon and conſcience; the dictates of which we are to revere †. But, though the human underſtanding is *darkened* ‡, none, it ſeems, are given up to *blindneſs* but ſuch who have abuſed their privileges (their rational powers I ſuppoſe) and ſtifled their convictions. Mr. Venn, indeed, flatly denies there is any ſuch thing as conſcience. He aſſerts § that the *law* of *conſcience* is FORMED by the *manners* and *ſentiments* of thoſe with whom we are educated, and with

* Scripture Characters, vol. I. p. 16, or 19.

† Ibid. vol. II, p. 64, or 80; vol. IV. p. 279, or 337.

‡ Ibid. vol. I. p. 66, or 82.

§ Complete Duty of Man, 2d. edit. p. 82.

whom we converſe. It is, he ſays, *depraved* by cuſtoms and prejudices.—What! *depraved* by thoſe very circumſtances to which it owes its origin? To be ſure, Mr. Venn cannot mean to ſay that this LAW of NATURE * is FORMED, but that it is *corrupted*, by the paſſions and prejudices of mankind, BECAUSE he writes a ſermon to ſhew the *nature* and *force* of *conſcience*; and it undoubtedly is much affected by theſe circumſtances, but certainly not more than the LAW of REVELATION. Is not the religion of much the greater part of mankind *as much* FORMED by the *manners* and *ſentiments* of thoſe with whom they are *educated* and *converſe?* Are not men Pagans or Mahometans, Papiſts or Proteſtants, Calviniſts or Lutherans, members of the Greek or Latin church;—do they not receive the Racovian catechiſm or the confeſſion of Augſbourg, hold this or the other mode of baptiſm, follow count Zinzindorf or baron Swedenborg;—juſt as the habits and opinions of thoſe are, with whom they happen to be? Nor is it uncommon for the moſt pious believers to agree in opinion with the rankeſt infidels. Mr. Hume maintains exactly the ſame opinion with Mr. Venn, that the law of conſcience is FORMED by the manners and ſentiments of thoſe with whom we are educated and converſe. Perhaps the aſſertion † that Chriſt was *overwhelmed* with a *dread* of HIS FATHER'S WRATH

* Rom. ii. 14, 15.

† Scripture Characters, vol. II. p. 170, or 204.

(an aſſertion ſo far from being found in Scripture, that it is contradicted, in ſeveral places, by the expreſs declarations both of God the Father and of Jeſus*) may be thought to favour not a little the repreſentation of Morgan and other infidel writers, that "the Deity acted upon a principle of *revenge*, which could not be brought to ſpare the offender unleſs ſome other object were provided for its gratification."

And now if I ſhould affirm, as is very properly affirmed †, that "we are all concerned to promote TRUTH as well as righteouſneſs;" and that, "with a full perſuaſion of it ‡, none ſhould be afraid or aſhamed to ſtand up in vindication of it;" that "we ought to examine for *ourſelves* § with ſtrict impartiality," and "judge with the moſt ſerious deliberation ‖;" "not forming our judgement from human deciſions ¶;" eſpecially if we conſider "how frequently *good* men, through haſte or *bigotry* **, take umbrage at the conduct of others;" "how prone they are to condemn ſuch as *accord* not *exactly* with *their* SYSTEMS ††;" and "how much can-

* Matt. iii. 17; xvii. 5; Luke ix. 35; John xv. 10.
† Scripture Characters, vol. II. p. 152, or 184.
‡ Ibid. p. 207, or 247; vol. III. p. 482, or 565.
§ Ibid. vol. III. p. 429, or 502.
‖ Ibid. vol. IV. p. 409, or 494.
¶ Ibid. vol. III. p. 311, or 364.
** Ibid. vol. IV. p. 248, or 298.
†† Ibid. p. 256, or 309.

dour is required to correct our miſtakes *;"—I ſhould not wonder, nevertheleſs, if what has been ſaid be called "boaſting of clear perceptions;" pretending to ſcience † like moſt haters of the goſpel ‡; leaning to our own underſtanding §;" conſidered as "vain ſpeculations indicative of an unhumbled and captious diſpoſition and a fondneſs for diſpute ‖;" and "ſubtleties not deſerving a reply ¶." And the leſs when I ſee good Mr. Scott, of the Lock, calling ALL thoſe who differ from him "pretended enquirers after truth;" charging them with "leaning to their own underſtanding, neglecting prayer, wanting diligence in the ſtudy of the word of God, and a believing dependance upon ſcripture-promiſes:" reproaching them with backing their opinions with the authority of great names—and yet, when it ſuits his purpoſe, backing his own with thoſe of biſhop Hall, Dr. Reynolds **, &c. &c. Thus Mr. Venn tells us ††, that the doctrine of two juſtifications ſprings from pride: what it ſprings from I know not; this I know, that many pious men among the reformers

* Scripture Characters, vol. II. p. 137, or 165.

† Ibid. vol. III. p. 344, or 403; and 236, or 279.

‡ Ibid. p. 237, or 279.

§ Ibid. p. 425, or 497.

‖ Ibid. p. 487, or 570; vol. IV. p. 7, or 8.

¶ Ibid. vol. III. p. 350, or 410.

** See Scott's Force of Truth, p. 137, 165.

†† Preface to the New Duty of Man, p. i. and x.

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held this opinion, of whom Mr. Venn can ſpeak well when he ſuppoſes their notions coincide with his own. With the like ſpirit Mr. Joſeph Milner ſhews how perfectly his modeſty accords with his diſcernment * :—what reaſon he has to plume himſelf upon the latter qualification the reader may ſee by turning to the note at the end of the Preliminary Diſſertation, p. 10.

* See his Remarks on Gibbon, p. 102, 103.

hold this opinion, of whom Mr. Vern can speak well when he supposes their notions coincide with his own. — With the like spirit Mr. Joseph Milner shews how perfectly his modesty accords with his discernment * :—what reason he has to plume himself upon the latter qualification the reader may see by turning to the note at the end of the Preliminary Dissertation, p. 10.

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* See his Remarks on Gibbon, p. 100, 101.